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To Doris

from Norman

John



THE MAURIZIUS CASE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The Triumph of Youth

The World's Illusion

Worlds' Ends

George Allen & Unwin Ltd

THE MAURIZIUS CASE

By Jacob Wassermann

LONDON
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PART ONE

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF LIFE

CHAPTER I

I

YOUNG ETZEL had felt a presentiment of evil even before the man with the seaman's cap had made his appearance. Perhaps it was due to the letter with the Swiss postmark. Coming home from school one day, he had seen the letter on the table under the mirror in the entrance-hall. He picked it up and examined it closely with his short-sighted eyes. The character of the handwriting affected him with the importunity of a forgotten object which cannot at once be located in the archives of the memory. A mysterious thing—a sealed letter! "To the Herr Attorney-General Wolf, Freiherr von Andergast", was the superscription; it was written in a round, fluent hand, a hand that seemed to run on wheels.

"What sort of a letter is this, Rie?" he said, turning to the housekeeper as she emerged from the kitchen. Ever since his childhood he had been calling Frau Rie just Rie, for short. She had been with them for nine years, and was as familiar to him as a woman can be who is called upon to assume the place of a mother, and who does actually fill that place in all external matters. And in this connection it may at once be stated that Herr von Andergast had already been divorced for nine and a half years; the rigorous conditions of the divorce constrained his wife to keep away from her child; she might neither see him nor write to him, and he too, of course, was forbidden to write to her, and no one was permitted to speak of her in his presence: so that the boy, now sixteen years old, knew nothing of his mother, and the spirit which ruled the house had even stifled the impulse to inquire about her. He had only been told casually, a long time ago, as though some indifferent stranger had been in question, that she lived in Geneva, and could not come to see him for reasons which he would learn when he was grown up. He had accepted this explanation because he could not do otherwise. Whether he was secretly interested in the matter or not no one could tell, because of the reserve he showed in all matters

touching his personal life. He had learned to keep silent, for he knew that the barriers which had been erected to oppose his curiosity in such a case as this were insuperable. The greater the demands made on his sympathy, the more self-control he felt obliged to show. Thus, the question addressed to Frau Rie had sounded as though it were a trap, and this was always the case when he wanted to discover something. He waited in ambush, and his short-sighted eyes watched events and persons with tense concentration.

Rie had not yet seen the letter. She took it from the boy's hand, looked at it intently, and forcing herself to seem unconcerned, she said: "That's your father's affair; don't you worry your head about that. Your bread-and-butter is inside on the table. One does not concern oneself with letters addressed to others."

"Heavens! How tiresome you are, Rie!" replied the boy. "You don't really think that I don't know whom the letter is from? Do they come often? Does she write often?"

Rie hesitated, and gazed with surprise at the determined expression on the boy's face as he looked up at her. "Not to my knowledge," she murmured, awkwardly; "so far as I know this is the first time." And again she looked at the small, white, intelligent face, and her embarrassed glance fell, till it surveyed only the delicate, boyish form, passing from the shoulders downwards.

"Is that really so, Rie?" asked Etzel, from out of his ambush, with a crafty smile.

"What has given you this notion?" asked Rie, irritably. "You're a regular detective. Are you laying a trap for me? I am as cunning as you are, and a long sight more!"

"Oh no, Rie, you're not as cunning as all that!" replied Etzel, as he looked at her compassionately. "Tell me, honestly, do such letters often come? Have you ever seen one before?" His eyes were wide open now, and there were brownish lights in their grey-green depths. His compassion was aroused by the awkward manner in which the good lady had sought to deceive him.

Whenever he had occasion to compare the sharpness of his wits with those of other people he was filled with a pitying wonder, and he was sometimes even a little alarmed, like someone who becomes conscious of a weakness of which he has been hitherto unaware.

"No, I tell you, it is the first time," replied Rie.

"I'd like to be there when *he* opens the letter and reads it," murmured Etzel, biting the knuckle of his middle finger, which he held thoughtfully between his teeth. *He*: the tone of his voice implied respect, fear, belief and aversion. The boy turned upon his heel, twirling his strapped-up school-books in his right hand, still keeping the knuckle of the middle finger of his left hand in his mouth, and strode off towards his room.

Rie looked after him with dissatisfaction. She did not like conversations which left one uncertain, when they were over, whether one's companion was displeased or not. Etzel was the only person in the house in whom she felt a response to her own thoughts. In this house feelings were neither required nor respected. It was an austere home. The master could not endure intimacy, nor did he invite it. The silent fulfilment of duty was what he looked for; sympathy would be tolerated only so long as it was becomingly taciturn. The most self-sacrificing zeal would have encountered the unfeeling observation that he paid his servants for their work, and, indeed, even for their sacrifices.

Rie could hear Etzel walking up and down in his room. His steps were ridiculously short. The recollection of his uplifted face, with the bronze lights in the depths of his eyes, filled her with anxiety. She thought: there is a human being, all of a sudden; up to now there was only a silly little boy; where has the human being come from all of a sudden?

She had known him for such a long while! He had been a quiet child, meditative rather than lively, and easily managed, because he was not greedy or covetous, and above all because he did not suffer from the fits of boredom—but what an inadequate word!—which oppress so many children like a mysterious and torturing obsession. There was always an air of merriment about

him. There was something cynical in his shrewdness; his grandmother, the old Baroness Andergast, who used to chatter to her acquaintances about his amusing speeches, called him "the philosopher", the "little professor". Rie looked upon herself as his mother by appointment, since the mother whom God had given him, of whom she knew nothing but hearsay, which might or might not be true, had run away from her duty. That was how she saw matters, for she had been influenced by the atmosphere of the house; fulfilment of duty—neglect of duty: these were the positive and negative poles between which the Andergast world—and that was the *whole* world—revolved. In her eyes Etzel was a child, a deserted child, and because she was allowed to mother him she had shut him up in her heart, and she was, above all things, convinced that she understood him. A delusion in which she was happy after her own fashion.

2

It may be that Herr von Andergast also had a feeling that the silly little boy had become a human being overnight, as it were; for Etzel's activities, the division of his day, his work and his reading, were now controlled even more strictly than before. A hint from Rie as to the incident of the letter had sufficed to make Herr von Andergast sense danger from that quarter, and he took his measures accordingly. That he was informed of such incidents was due to the inner compulsion which he exerted on those about him; and when such a report was incomplete he filled it in with that unerring constructive talent which was one of his most redoubtable and intimidating qualities. It was this compulsion which kept him constantly assured of the possession of secret reserves, on which, as a general thing, he made no further demands, once he had put persons and events where he wanted them to be, and where they served him, without ever becoming conscious of the wires by which he manipulated them. It was like a model electrical plant, a reliable apparatus of contacts, wires, and time-saving and invisible circuits.

Etzel had grown up under the operation of these impeccable

arrangements, and his nerves had adjusted themselves to them, although they rebelled at times. He lived between glass walls. Offences of which he was guilty were not discussed; he was not threatened; the infractions were merely noted. It was a silent system. In a critical situation all the inhabitants of the house seemed of their own volition to assume the duty of spies. Tradespeople, errand-boys, postmen, ushers and officers of the court were in all respects subordinate to this superior will, which ruled without ever proclaiming its sovereignty, and without taking any special pains to impress itself on individual persons. They were subdued to obedience and trained to espionage merely by the fact that the sovereign will existed, majestic and ponderous as a mountain.

These were the impressions of Etzel's childhood, the whole of which had been subjected to a lynx-eyed but unobtrusive surveillance. There was nothing that escaped supervision. Curriculum, time-table, exercise-books and school reports were all according to schedule, and all tended to attain a cold, business-like standardization. And yet no verbal instructions were given, nor was obedience openly enforced; it was merely silently communicated, and the cold matter-of-fact objectivity of the process did not permit even a thought of opposition to arise. The daily routine, the distribution of time—all was stamped with the spirit of regularity. Lunch, one-fifteen; supper, seven-thirty; bath, Wednesday and Saturday at nine o'clock; pocket-money, one mark per week; acquaintance with X.Y. not advisable, therefore to cease. If anyone looked surprised—"Well, is there anything to say?" In the case of embarrassed hesitation—"Well?" Quite friendly, but extremely cool. Very deliberate. Perfect *savoir faire*, perfect *savoir vivre*.

When a real personality leaves the room the atmosphere is not quit of him for a long time. His energy is communicated to lifeless objects. How then must he be felt in the rooms in which he lives and breathes, the bed in which he sleeps, the chair in which he sits, the mirror into which he looks, the desk at which he works, the cigar-holder and ash-tray which he uses! All these

bear his stamp, something of his aspect and his gestures, even of his physical temperature, as though he daily yielded up to them an imperceptible fraction of his blood.

Ever since he could think and remember Etzel had heard a certain door open and shut in one and the same way; the aperture slowly and spaciouly grew wider, as though the powerful figure must first measure the space with his eye, and visually control it; the closing was irrevocable, like the sealing of a letter fraught with destiny. Out of this the imagination wrought a sequence of fixed ideas: a withdrawal from a world in which life was deplorable; a ceremonious affixing of one's name to portentous pieces of writing; an intimidating loneliness. As a child he had often crept up to the door and gazed at it for a long time with widely opened eyes, as though trying to decipher the invisible runic letters with which it was inscribed. When he heard his father clearing his throat, or noted the tread of his feet on the floor, and their heavy striding up and down the room, which had the rhythm of a man attacking an army of evil thoughts, he quietly withdrew, and sought in the silence of his room to divine something of these thoughts, something of these ratified decisions—something, in fact, of his father's gloomy and perilous world.

It was the same with the sound of the bell which sounded with such peremptory curtness only when rung from his father's rooms: punctually at half-past seven in the morning from the bedroom, and at half-past two from the study, after the afternoon nap, except on days when the court sat in the afternoon. Etzel started at every stroke: twice a day he was overcome by the same nervous tenseness, the same beating of his heart. It still happened, not infrequently—and to the child this had been a veritable nightmare—that he would start out of his sleep because the bell had sounded in his dreams. He would listen, and see before him, plastically clear in the darkness, his father's hand, with the index finger imperiously extended. He knew this hand even better than his own: over and over again it recurred as an apparition in his dreams; it was a narrow, distinguished-looking hand, the fingers tapering to a point, the nails tinged with yellow, and

on the back was a film of brown, silky hair. Sometimes, in his dreams, the hand moved like a strange reptile over the blue folder of a document. Its silent eloquence, or its eloquent silence, made one at times think of the hand of an actor, but of a particularly experienced and superior actor, who accepts only serious and intellectual rôles, and plays them with conspicuous poise: who acts *in* them rather than *acts* them, in order to emphasize the fact that he preserves his aloofness. With this conception of distance Etzel had early become familiar, although his own personal character, in contrast to that of his father, was dependent on proximity. As regards externals this was emphasized by his short-sightedness.

3

This system of silent control was now hardly fulfilling its purpose any longer, even in appearance, for Etzel had already found effective methods of freeing himself from its inconvenient trammels. This was, of course, more difficult for him than for other boys in the same situation, since he felt bound by his loyalty to an implicit understanding, and his mental independence prevented him from confiding in those of his own age. Nor was it possible for him to attach himself to one of the cliques or parties which his comrades had formed, and were constantly forming anew. He took no pleasure in their debates, and attended their meetings but seldom and unwillingly. He could hardly be induced to express himself either for or against a question, and their categorical decisions merely aroused his doubts. There was more courage in his reticence than in the noisy vehemence of his companions; this was recognized, and, curiously enough, he was respected for it. His only friend—for privately he was sparing of the word, though in public he permitted it to pass out of courtesy—was a radical, restless fellow. In the last resort, however, it was not because of Robert Thielemann's views that he had chosen him as a companion, but rather for a certain largeness and candour which pleased him; and the result was a relationship that was based on an adjustment of temperaments, in which large and

small, clumsy and alert, rough and delicate were supplemented by their opposites.

Thielemann loved to play the part of Etzel's protector, while recognizing his intellectual or personal superiority. He did not understand Etzel's originality of thought, which sometimes verged on the bizarre, but the boy's lack of physical development, together with a certain subtle quality (beneath which there was a strength which he did not realize) led him to mother the younger and weaker boy. And not Thielemann only, but all of Etzel's companions were indulgent in their attitude to him.

Etzel, as we have said, did not idealize his friendship with Thielemann. He recognized clearly enough its temporary nature, as well its insufficiency, and behaved like a person who, perhaps from modesty, because he does not wish to be conspicuous, or because he has not found anything better, gladly agrees to occupy a house which is too small for him, though his means would permit him to take a better one. And in general, all his relationships were dominated by a feeling of their temporary nature, though he did not know whence this arose, nor was he able to struggle against it. It was difficult enough to conceal this from the world at such times as he could not prevent himself from perceiving it. That was just it; he had the gift of concealing things from himself, a difficult process, which called for cunning and some degree of imagination. He did not, however, set any value upon imagination; he did not want to know anything about it; and this was a further peculiarity of his character.

He would gladly have talked to Robert Thielemann about the man with the seaman's cap, but he refrained from doing so because he was afraid to admit to himself the uneasiness which this person was causing him. The thrice-repeated appearance of the old man constantly occupied—and darkened—his thoughts. On the day when he had learned that this mysterious man had been dogging his father's footsteps also, and that he had dared even to confront him—when he realized that this confrontation, in spite of his father's pride and his cold inaccessibility, was not a matter of indifference to him, not a mere trivial episode

(and of this Etzel believed he had reason to be certain), on this day his uneasiness changed into a continual and irritable distrust of everyone and everything about him. It was as though the walls could not longer be depended upon to support the roof, as though the cupboards were filled with a pervading virus, as though a fuse were burning in the cellar which must presently explode a chest of dynamite. This condition of painful expectation lasted, with greater or lesser intervals, until he found in one of his father's folders the document which was to have a decisive influence on the whole of his future life.

4

The manner and appearance of the man with the seaman's cap, though at first sight they were quite inconspicuous and commonplace, had nevertheless a certain spectral quality. Perhaps this was due to the tense and penetrating scrutiny with which he observed the boy at their first encounter; after which he dogged his steps, trying to catch up with him, in order, when he had succeeded, to stare at him again; finally disappearing as unexpectedly as he had appeared. He was a small, lean old man, not a gentleman; neither was he a working-man; he belonged, to judge from his appearance, to some stratum of the lower middle class. He seemed to be about seventy years of age, but he looked fairly robust; his movements, at all events, were not lacking in agility. He wore a shabby brown fur coat, and his hands were cased in woollen gloves, with red-bordered gauntlets; his left arm hung stiffly by his side. On his first two appearances he had been smoking a short English pipe, or he might have been only holding it unlighted between his teeth; at all events, between the thin line of his cleanly-shaven lips one could see his indifferent and blackish teeth. Etzel could have reproduced every line of the bony, tense, malicious face, the little spying, glistening eyes, which had an astigmatic look, as though one of them were of glass, and the queer-looking ears, protruding over the grey-green side-whiskers, like two plucked birds in a withered thicket. On the first occasion Etzel had seen him on the lower bridge

over the Main. Etzel was in the company of Robert Thielemann, the stuttering Schlehlein, long-necked Max Schuster, who was playing a part in the Youth Movement, fat Klaus Mohl—Greedy Mohl, as they called him, because of his constant and voracious appetite—Müller I and Müller II. A political dispute was in progress. The cause was a bitter remark of Thielemann's about Schuster's treacherous machinations. The group of which he was leader had been spreading unpleasant rumours about the republican group, and Thielemann had reproached them for their contemptible behaviour, for allowing themselves, without ever declaring their position, to be manipulated like marionettes by people concerning whom they did not even know whether they were or were not the paid agents of the reactionaries. "You're a fine set of fellows!" he exclaimed repeatedly, and his broad accent contrasted oddly with his anger. He waved his arms in the air as he spoke, and his screeching voice appeared to annoy the passers-by. His appearance was not precisely calculated to arouse confidence; his face was covered with coffee-coloured freckles, and his cloak was flapping round his shoulders. When, finally, he hurled the reproach at his opponents that they and their supporters had already terrorized those among the teachers whom one had some reason, so far, to consider honest—even a man like Camill Raff no longer openly avowed his position, but had crept away timidly and was holding aloof—he was green with rage, and seemed almost on the point of flying at Schuster and the two Müllers. Then Schuster grinned at him, half embarrassed and half in challenge, while the stutterer Schlehlein, knowing he was backed by superior numbers, planted himself in front of Thielemann and said, insolently: "That's t-t-true; your Raff is—is—is one of those who l-l-look to their b-b-bread and b-b-butter; the fellow's afraid of lo-losing his j-j-job." Thielemann gave him a look of contempt, and exclaimed: "Shut up, you fool!" He looked round for support, but there was no one behind him, for Etzel, to whom such scenes were distasteful, had separated himself from his squabbling companions, and had gone on ahead. They had by now come to the bridge, and while

Thielemann was looking about him in search of support his face assumed an expression of alarm; he saw Etzel in the middle of the street, lost in thought, walking in the direction of a motor-lorry which was rapidly approaching, and which in a moment would have knocked him down. He shrieked loudly: "Look out, Andergast, damn it, look out!" and with one leap he was beside the endangered boy, snatching him back just in time, so that the mud-guard of the vehicle only grazed his hip.

Hearing the name Andergast, a man who was standing by the railing of the bridge, with a pipe between his lips, looking down into the river, as though he neither saw nor heard what was going on about him, wheeled about with a sudden jerk, staring at the group of boys. His eyes fastened sharply on Etzel, and when Thielemann pushed his arm through the boy's, and said, half commandingly, half irritably: "Come along, Andergast, let's leave those blackguards!" he followed the two to the Neue Mainzer Strasse, keeping about twenty yards behind them. He did not catch up with them until they reached the square in front of the Opera House, where they looked into the window of a bookshop; then he waited until they moved on again, when he looked once more at Etzel as he had looked at him on the bridge, with a glittering, penetrating glance that was both calm and thoughtful. "Do you know him?" asked Thielemann with surprise, as they walked along. "No," said Etzel, and an uncomfortable thrill ran down his spine.

Two days later the man stood before the entrance to the Gymnasium. It was noon; the classes were pouring out of the entrance-hall, scattering in all directions with a deafening uproar. Etzel was among the stragglers; his first glance as he stepped aside fell on the man with the seaman's cap. He gazed at him with round, puzzled eyes. The man looked at him without a smile, without any change of expression, and followed on his heels. Since the unpleasant sensation in Etzel's spine was even more perceptible than it had been the day before, he pushed his pile of books tightly into the hollow of his armpit, and set off at a

trot, which in a few minutes left his unknown pursuer half a mile in the rear.

5

The third time he was standing before the Andergast house, at the corner of the Lindenstrasse, when Etzel came home from his gymnastic class, together with Heinz Ellmers. This Ellmers, the son of a builder, an excellent mathematician, had offered to help Etzel with a problem in algebra which he was to have done at home, and before which he had sat helpless the whole of the previous evening. As a matter of fact he could not bear Ellmers, who was loud-mouthed and pushing, and had almost been boycotted by the whole class a few months earlier, on account of some incident of tale-bearing which had never been quite cleared up. Ellmers had offered Etzel his help with such straightforward insistence—he probably wanted to be able to say that he had been to Baron Andergast's—that Etzel saw no reason for not yielding. This time Etzel was scared when he saw the man with the seaman's cap. There was something menacing in his repeated appearance, something that evoked a sense of coercion. The closer proximity of the man, together with the loneliness of the silent street, was for some reason terrifying. His short-sightedness had hitherto prevented his noting the features of the stranger and the details of his appearance. Now the man stood so close to him that he could see the yellowish whites of his eyes, and even the shabby cloth buttons of his fur coat. When he entered the front garden from the street, Ellmers following at his heels, the caretaker was talking to a policeman in the gateway. The caretaker greeted Etzel, and the policeman saluted, knowing him to be the son of the attorney-general. Etzel felt suddenly giddy when he saw that the man with the seaman's cap also was preparing to enter the house. Probably he counted on passing the caretaker without being accosted (thereby avoiding troublesome questions) by following on the heels of the two boys; one could read the thought in his face. And he succeeded; the caretaker gave him a suspicious glance, but let him pass. In the hall he remained standing, and

gazed after the boys. Etzel dropped his strap of books. Ellmers picked it up. "Thanks," said Etzel. He was listening with a strained attention; the higher they mounted the stairs the more tensely he listened. A few steps beyond the first landing he turned and stood listening. Ellmers looked anxiously into his face and asked: "Is anything wrong with you, Andergast? You look so white." Etzel, still listening, whispered: "Is he coming?" The other replied in astonishment, "Who? Whom do you mean?" Etzel clung tightly to the balusters. Someone was groping his way up the stairs. What sort of a fellow is he, that he sticks to one so obstinately, thought Etzel; the obstinate persecution of this unknown man filled him with increasing dread. Heinz Ellmers, however, felt this moment as never before that the other thoroughly disliked him, and he looked up gloomily, and with some hostility, at Etzel, who was standing two steps above him, and now looked up in his turn, with a new tenseness in his face, for he could hear steps coming downwards too, steps with which he was familiar. After a time Herr von Andergast's slender figure appeared against the square of the window. He was turning the corner of the stairs; while down below the man with the seaman's cap was just coming into view. It seemed to Etzel that this movement was full of significance, although his common sense could only regard it as a chance meeting. Herr von Andergast nodded to the boys, and asked some indifferent question—"Have you finished already for the day?" or something of the sort—without pausing in his descent; and then his glance fell on the man with the seaman's cap. The latter at once stood stiffly to attention, with his back to the wall, lifting two fingers to the peak of his cap, saying in a queer, croaking voice, with a military curtness, which had at the same time a comical effect: "My name is Maurizius." So saying, he thrust his left hand—awkwardly, on account of the evident stiffness of his arm—into the pocket of his fur coat, and tried to bring something out of it. Herr von Andergast turned his head and looked at him for a moment or two; he had assumed his haughty expression, and his eyes were dull between their half-closed lids; he

looked, and passed on. Then he looked round again; his forehead was slightly wrinkled; he made an impatient gesture with his hand, and hastened his steps. All this took only a few moments, but Etzel now knew for certain that his father too was acquainted with the man with the seaman's cap. He realized, from the expression of his father's face, from his reluctant gesture, from the movement of his back, and the way in which he went downstairs, a step at a time, that this meeting on the stairs was not his first encounter with the man. Maurizius meanwhile stood at attention against the wall, his left hand inside his fur coat, and his eyes, with their astigmatic look, gazing downwards into the twilight of the staircase.

6

And this was actually the case. Again and again the old man had appeared before Herr von Andergast, with his weary acquiescence, his watchful persistence. There were many who crossed his path; none without timidity, and few without anxiety. This man appeared to be neither timid nor anxious. He had nothing of the tramp or the outcast about him; he reminded one rather of a provincial, of a man in poor circumstances who did not quite know how to behave in the capital. Nevertheless, there was in his manner a lack of respect, an impertinence even, which grated on Herr von Andergast's nerves. He did not know who the man was. To the best of his belief he had never seen him before. But there he was one day, standing before him like one who obstinately means to be noticed at any cost. It was noon. With the same shudder that always came over him when he left the court-house, and which the warmth of the March sun did not dispel, Herr von Andergast buttoned his coat, replied without a glance to the porter's respectful greeting, and set out for home. This was his daily walk. In the animated street he was forced to lift his hat repeatedly, and although he performed this ceremony without a glance, his bearing and gesture had in every case a *nuance* which corresponded to the social rank of the person saluted, from a brief touch of the brim to the lifting of the hat,

which described a measured semicircle before it was deliberately restored to his bald head. The persons thus saluted, whosoever they might be—artisans, small tradesmen, bank directors, editors, landowners, municipal officials—betrayed in their greeting the eager alacrity which they felt to be due to Herr von Andergast's high office, as well as to his dreaded personality. Accustomed to the reverence of a whole city, he walked through it coldly. His glance, directed straight ahead, took no account of what was passing in the street; indeed, his expression seemed to deny its reality, as though this reality were a trap for him, as though it involved a distasteful intimacy; and his gait had not merely the characteristic, repressed quality peculiar to people who move for the most part in closed rooms, but also the characteristic non-chalance of those who have constantly to protect themselves against importunity. And now there was this figure in his path! An unknown person who dared to stare into the face of Herr von Andergast, the attorney-general! With a pipe stuck in his mouth! To stare in his face, and, as he felt without looking round, to follow him! And then, increasing his pace, to overtake him, and again stand at a street corner, staring! With his pipe in his mouth! It was unparalleled. The next day, the same impudence. And again three days later. Perhaps the man was crazy; one of those fellows with a grouch, so familiar to the police and the law-courts, who went about with some unsatisfied claim, trying to force the authorities to action. The wisest thing was to ignore their existence, and at some time or other to give the police of the ward a hint. Then came the confrontation on the staircase. Forcing his way into the house—that was going too far, that couldn't be overlooked; he must take steps to prevent that sort of thing! At first Herr von Andergast did not heed the name which the anxious-looking fellow had uttered. When he realized what it was he involuntarily turned his head. He could not conceal his astonishment.

On the following day a petition was presented through the prescribed official channels; it was by no means the first in that connection, but only one of the many importunities which had

come from the same source. They had, as it were, become almost a matter of routine. Thus an apparently harmless explanation of the incident had been found, although the man's impudent manner remained none the less incomprehensible. In any case the matter was not worth further thought.

CHAPTER II

I

IN Etzel's mind the appearance of the man with the seaman's cap, and particularly the encounter with his father on the stairs, which, although unexpected, had the effect of something planned, and the image of the letter with the Swiss postmark and the handwriting which seemed to have a private message for him, were now inextricably connected. In both there was something that invited or challenged him; the difference was merely that the former was quite external and the latter wholly internal, so that he seemed to himself like a pendulum swinging between the two. Both, however, confused him profoundly, and withdrew his thoughts from his usual occupations and daily duties to such an extent that one morning, instead of taking the road to the Gymnasium, depending on the mechanical memory of his legs, he turned in the opposite direction, walking as if in a dream, deposited his pile of books in the Bockenheim station, and took the train to the Taunus. In Oberursel he left the train and strolled towards the Saalburg, unheeding of his route or destination, and wandered about in the woods, unmindful of the storm and the occasional heavy showers. When the downpour became too heavy he took shelter under a tree or in a wood-cutter's hut. He was as if lost in a dream; but only "as if". For we are not dealing with a dreamer, by any means—that must be made clear at the outset. He was in the full possession of his five senses. He knew what he was doing, and he did it without much ceremony; he was not simply mooning about; he had a clock in his head and the time at his finger-tips. The proof of this was the fact that at one-fifteen he appeared at the lunch-table, punctually as usual, washed and in dry clothes. To have done with a thing, to dispose of it with his intelligence, to be clear about it, to perceive cause and effect, to call a problem solved—this was his ambition, and he practised it at every opportunity. He wanted to do it in this case too; it was this that had driven him forth. But for once he had not succeeded; his bewilderment was too great.

On the following evening, during his "duty conversation" with his father, he noticed that the latter was in some way different in his manner. It was impossible to say just what the difference was, or what was his intention; a clairvoyant could hardly have divined his intentions and purposes when he wished to conceal them. He was more friendly than usual; there was something ingratiating in his manner; for example, he twice passed Etzel the cheese, and inquired, smilingly, whether he wouldn't have his hair cut soon. It was at once evident to Etzel that his father knew of his morning's expedition, and of his staying away from school, and that there would now ensue one of those covert discussions which always terrified him. One could not expect it with certainty; but it was worse if it remained a threat, a veiled silence between them. Herr von Andergast was evidently doing his utmost to make Etzel speak of the matter himself; by his very mildness he seemed to invite him to do so. But the more he tried the more uncomfortable the boy became, until at last he gazed in tense silence, almost without moving an eyelash, at the imposing face across the table, the face which was to him so inscrutable, which always evoked in him a sense of his own insufficiency. It was not possible for him to do what was asked of him under such strong moral pressure, though without spoken words; if it had been he would have been able to do it yesterday. He did not know why he had not done it, why he could *not* do it. No courage and no argument were of any avail. While he gazed into his father's face with an intentness which seemed to surprise the Baron, but which apparently did not disturb him further, he racked his brains as to how his father could have found out so quickly about his excursion. Certainly not from his form-master; Dr. Camill Raff was not in the habit of making a fuss about every trifling incident; besides, he was indulgent to Etzel. The boy wondered, too, why his father was trying to entice him to confess by roundabout approaches, instead of simply asking him questions and taking him to task. But this, of course, was nothing new. Nothing was simple in their mutual relation. When he thought about it his very ideas became confused.

Here, however, I must explain, in order to throw some light on the relation between father and son, what I mean by Etzel's "duty conversation".

2

They saw one another only in the house. Herr von Andergast, overburdened by his professional work, never took a walk, never went to the theatre or to a concert. He disliked showing himself in public; with the exception of a few colleagues, with whom he was brought into contact in the course of his official duties—Sydow, President of Assize, and his family, for example—he had almost no social relations. He felt no need of social intercourse. Such official entertainments as he could not avoid he regarded as a burden. Once a month he visited his old mother, the widow of a general, the *Generalin*, as she was called for short, in her country house at Eschersheim. Sunday afternoons and holidays were devoted to the study of the legal documents which were always accumulating.

To spend two hours daily with Etzel was nevertheless part of the routine of life, just like the study of documents. To conceal the fact that these hours were a matter of routine, an educational measure, was one of the tasks which he had set himself. He could devote only the evening hours to this purpose. At lunch—a meal from which he was often absent, owing to his professional duties—they met simply as strangers. Herr von Andergast's bearing was reserved; the mind behind the strikingly intellectual and finely modelled forehead was busy with its thoughts; the violet eyes with their fixed, gloomy ardour had an absent expression.

Moreover, Frau Rie was present at lunch, and though Herr von Andergast fully recognized her usefulness as the manager of his household, she none the less wearied him by her "unofficial" presence. Etzel found her almost as trying; he was fond of her and liked to talk to her, but only when he was alone with her; in his father's presence, and especially at the table, she made him nervous to the point of hatred. She sat so complacently on her chair, as though she were constantly praising herself in silence

for providing a meal of such excellent quality, despite the many difficulties which she considerably kept to herself. Even the appetite with which she ate was like a silent commendation of herself, and what she said was as fatuous as the maxims in a girl's copybook. In the evening she kept her room. When the table had been cleared Herr von Andergast lit his cigar and unbent with a perceptible act of will. His bearing and expression relaxed; not indeed that he ever unbent completely; far from it; but the violet eyes no longer had their secret ardour, and at such times they reminded one strikingly of the eyes of a naïve young girl.

Generally he began the conversation with a few harmless questions, skirmished about a little, seized upon a subject, provoked Etzel to contradiction, took pleasure in the contradiction, parried it with the skill of a duellist, defended that which was traditional and established against wayward innovation, suggested compromises, and after a heated debate was prepared in theory to accept a revolutionary point of view. But it always seemed to Etzel that although his father entered into such discussions with apparent enthusiasm, he was really like a man playing a hand of cards; it was as though his talk were merely the ironical play of a partner who does not wish to take advantage of an incomparably stronger position. He's infernally clever, thought Etzel, angrily and full of awe; one can't get at him anyhow. In his naïve, youthful eagerness he always came to the point where there was no other help than paradox, and into this he then plunged wildly, whereupon his father would express a Jesuitical compassion.

"You are not only a fighting-cock," Herr von Andergast would say at last, looking at his gold watch, "you are full of tricks and dodges: one has to keep an eye on you." Then Etzel would stare at him with surprise and suspicion, for he was certain that he had not deserved this particular compliment.

The conversation generally ended in some such way—indcisively, leaving behind an uncomfortable vacuum. Punctually at half-past nine Herr von Andergast would rise from the table,

with an expression which had no longer the remotest relation to the words which last had been spoken; whereupon Etzel would turn to the door with a rather absurd precipitation, seize the door-knob, and bow with the vague smile of a person who has somehow been outwitted. Yes, it seemed to him that he had been duped, he could not say why, and every time he left the room he felt that he had been "dismissed", very much as when he had received a wiggling from the rector.

If Herr von Andergast was obliged to go out in the evening he would appear in Etzel's room late in the afternoon, sit down at the table at which the boy was doing his home-work, tell him to go on quietly working, and watch him. After a while Etzel would become embarrassed, lose his bearings, and come to a standstill. "What are you working at?" Herr von Andergast would ask him. When it was a mathematical problem or a lesson in history he would show interest. With his admirable eloquence, "making every word tell", as the actors say, he one day praised the intellectual lucidity in which mathematics trained the student, and the magic of numbers, of pure numbers, to which, of course, it made him susceptible. It gave one—he asserted—a vital and realistic conception of the laws of nature, and as the keystone of a cupola unites the seemingly divergent elements, so mathematics was able to combine the highest and the most contrasting human faculties. Etzel listened attentively, but he looked like an obstinate little dog who was not minded to fetch. On another occasion, however, when his father recommended the study of the science of history with the same gentle insistence, he became excited and refractory, questioning in particular whether history was a science at all. One might by the same token call the copying of documents or the reading of newspapers a science. Where, in history, was there cognition—what were its laws, and where did it rest on a firm foundation? It was a mass of memoirs, of arbitrary nomenclature and chronology, at the best a romance. "Oh!" said Herr von Andergast, making a gesture like that of a conductor when the kettle-drum is over-loud.

Essentially, these conversations were exercises in dialectic, and

the ground which they covered was definitely staked out by Herr von Andergast. Etzel knew that he must not overstep the bounds. The man who listened with so much friendliness to his intellectual experiences, who even enticed them from his lips, who followed his train of thought—as a rule very decided, frequently immature, and sometimes extremely vehement—would inevitably have changed into a block of ice if the boy had permitted himself to speak of external events, of the topics of the day, of his relations to a friend or teacher, or had gone so far as to ask questions which touched upon his father's profession, or his private life, or his past. If he dared even to hint at such matters, yielding to a secret urge, knowing that he would be sharply reprimanded, Herr von Andergast would rise to his feet, frown, and say, with an oblique and fugitive glance: "We shall discuss that at a more suitable time." Etzel had reason to suppose that he had never yet been made to feel the greatest depths of his father's coldness; the instantaneous fall in temperature at the slightest slip made him anxious enough as it was. At moments when he thought he was not under observation—and such moments were even more infrequent than he supposed, for it was the very essence of Herr von Andergast's character to keep his eyes open, and to make full use of them—he looked at his father as at a tower, a tower without an entrance, without doors and without windows, which simply rose sheer and majestic, filled with secrets from top to bottom. His profound admiration was mingled with a fear equally profound. As an only son, and motherless, he was inexpressibly alone when he faced his father. This confrontation became for him a symbol of their relation, and if he attempted to approach him more closely his father retreated as many steps as he advanced; if, however, the latter approached him he became alarmed, and was at once on his guard. His father's reputation for severity and inflexibility, and his iron rigidity in matters of principle, had come to his ears in early childhood, for among the people Andergast was called "the bloody"—of course, quite unjustly—for an exalted sense of duty and the consciousness of his high office permeated his personality to the very pores, almost

to the point of ossification. But such words propagate and spread like bacteria, and though Etzel did not actually hear them, he nevertheless felt their reverberation, and his dreams (for during his waking hours he closed his eyes, and did not allow his imagination to play with the subject) showed forth figures like those in Dante's *Inferno*; for all things are in us from the very beginning, even that which we have never seen and never known. There he pictured his father in a blaze of fire, delivering judgment over the hordes of the damned.

3

Herr von Andergast sat in a half-shadow; he could not bear the full glare of the electric light, as his eyes were prone to inflammation; all the Andergasts had weak eyes, and the old *Generalin* had suffered for years from a disorder of the optic nerve. Perhaps this fact had a deeper significance; he who lives only by his eyes suffers through his eyes. There was something abnormal, too, in the intense violet of Herr von Andergast's eyes. He sat with his legs crossed, his body almost forcibly erect, as was his long, oval head, with its bald, polished skull and its fringe of closely-cropped iron-grey hair. There was something in his bearing—as of a man enthroned—and in his half-abstracted manner, which drew Etzel's glance towards him as though he were winding thread upon a shuttle; but he seemed neither to know this nor to wish it. To the boy the silhouette of his father, seated with crossed legs, and half abstracted, was as familiar as a lifeless emblem which one saw every day of one's life. As a matter of fact, if you looked at him casually, in a half-light, he was not unlike a hieratic figure on the wall of an Egyptian temple. Familiarity with rigidity is disastrous, for such familiarity solves nothing and reveals nothing. The timidity and the sense of distance of which Etzel was conscious were constant and unchanging, and so was his twofold preparedness, firstly for a possible fall of temperature, and then for the moment when he was "dismissed". He looked over towards the half-light always with the same feeling of tension; every evening, as to-day, he gazed with a timid astonishment on

the athletic figure, the virile chin, the strong straight nose, the vigorous lips and the powerful throat, only partly concealed by the short, carefully trimmed, pointed beard, which was already grey. There was an indefinable aura of melancholy about his person, of that dissatisfaction which is peculiar to those who are unable to pursue the destiny in which they believe. Such men, diverted from the goal which they once proposed to themselves, in days which they remember only as a vague phantasmagoria, hide their disappointment from the eyes of the world behind an armour of pride and reserve. It is the sense of isolation that gives them value in their own eyes, and every experience and every disappointment confirms them in this isolation. And because they finally lose themselves in this isolation they become so strange, so aloof, so inscrutable, that there no longer seems to be any language in which one can communicate with them. This was often Etzel's predominating impression; he is a terribly long way off, he thought, and when one finally gets there one is absolutely stupid with fatigue. Perhaps he was unduly sensitive, but he had so much in common with his father, there was so much in the latter that attracted him, that the things which divorced and repelled him were ten times more tormenting. He had seldom suffered so acutely from them as to-day. More than once he was on the point of jumping up and leaving the room on the pretext of a headache.

It would be difficult to say why Herr von Andergast took such an intense interest in Etzel's adventure of the previous morning. As a matter of fact he used the word "adventure", although the term did not fit a plain case of truancy, of wandering about aimlessly in the rain. A lawyer had seen Etzel in the Oberursel station, and had casually mentioned the fact to Herr von Andergast that morning; such was the simple explanation of his puzzling knowledge of the adventure. Chance! And he was now exploiting this chance in his own fashion. Whether he was impelled by psychological curiosity, or by the fear that this was only the beginning of a series of arbitrary acts and omissions, it was impossible to determine; his mode of thought was so endlessly

complicated. Independent action must be prevented as long as possible, but how and by what means? This was a spirit which must be tamed; the most dangerous explosive in the world. He was gradually realizing, in the first place, that his artificial system of keeping his distance was defective; and, secondly, that it was spitefully revenging itself on him, for after using the same path so exclusively only the bypaths remained to be travelled, since to pass through the barricades of the direct route would have meant a ridiculous waste of time. Even prison warders have their pride of place. They feel themselves responsible not only for the prisoners, but also for the house, the walls, the doors, the locks and the keys. In the end the warder himself no longer has any freedom.

His sonorous voice filled the room. There was at all times something compelling about it. His leisurely choice of words—a barrier-language, one of his enemies had called it—was rooted in the endeavour to find the most pregnant form of expression for every thought. There were times when this produced an impression of self-complacency; but he was not complacent; it was only that the consciousness of his superiority had entered into his very blood, and in intercourse with his fellows this expressed itself as dry pedantry or consequential objectivity. In this he was extraordinarily German—that is, according to the most modern conception of what is German. Almost all gifted speakers are inclined to regard their audience as minors, but this attitude is never less justified than when the listener is really a minor. The more pains Herr von Andergast took the more clearly did he feel that his words were vexatiously turning to dust. To meet with no resistance was to encounter the most insuperable resistance. For what was he really contending? Against what was he preaching? There were several things in the air beside the Taunus “adventure”: there was the question of the letter and the meeting with the idiotic old man on the stairs. Herr von Andergast was conscious of latent questions which did not dare to emerge into the open, but he had not the least desire that they should be put. The evening before the

boy had dared to question the justice of a decision in a political case; this was extraordinarily bold of him, this violation of the customary ceremonial! His companions, Etzel reported, had discussed the case heatedly; so far as he could see it looked as if there was a manifest disproportion between the offence and the penalty; the crime was slight, the punishment inhuman. To this conversation, which he had abruptly discontinued on the previous day, Herr von Andergast now reverted. It was undesirable that legal proceedings should become the talk of the street. It was disastrous to confuse justice and sentiment, for this meant placing the absolute at the mercy of the accidental. Justice was an idea, not a matter of feeling; the law was not an agreement between two parties, to be modified at will, but a sacred and permanent form. It was true and inviolably valid, and so it had been ever since there had been judges to sentence the guilty and codes of law which classified offences. But what was it that flashed such incredulous denial from the eyes of the boy who faced him? The law was eternal in form? The lad started restlessly in his chair and bit his knuckles in embarrassment. He had heard a whisper to the effect that the State had a right hand and a left, and a twofold measure, one for the one hand and one for the other; and more than one scales, and for each scales various weights. What were the facts? He did not ask this aloud, but his eyes asked the question. For the rest, he had not doubted "justice as an idea", but the justice of a specific decision, and the matter had nothing to do with his heart, only with his understanding and his powers of judgment. Here you are completely on the wrong tack, my dear father, but let's drop the subject, said his eyes.

Perhaps Herr von Andergast understood the silent speech of the sixteen-year-old boy, which expressed the doubting and denying spirit of his generation; a spirit sick to the very root, unrestrained and undisciplined. It was a fit of accumulated anger which had led him to his tactical mistake. Proof, example, explanation were in vain. Darkness does not become light because one mobilizes reasons against it. Light cannot convince the blind, cannot enlighten the misguided. This new spirit about which

people were prating and drivelling, where was it? In themselves, they said. But there was nothing new; there was nothing old. Man, his life, his birth, his death, these things had not changed for the past six thousand years, nor indeed for the past sixty thousand; it was merely a fiction of men who have but a little time on earth to attempt to make an epoch of every lustrum. The less people are in themselves the more they expect from their period; but the same immemorial stream turns their mill with the rest, and they think they have changed its course because they perceive that their wheel too is turned by its waters. He still believed that his casual manner would assure him of the accustomed victory, but actually his despotism was about to suffer shipwreck. Naturally, he was prepared some day to accept the alien nature of his son; perhaps this alien nature had appeared so soon because in his icy scepticism he had so long been prepared for it; for fear creates the thing it dreads. Yet it was not the despotism of the father which suffered a defeat, but that of the official. To Herr von Andergast his service was a vocation, his vocation a mission. He was the agent of an absolute master, whose interests he represented and in whose name he operated, and whose Asiatic absolutism might not be diminished by any loosening of the forms of government. The master, although he might disappear as a real person from the scene of action, remained as a symbol. And the servant, too, was a symbol; as a servant he had no history, no previous existence, no private life. Every human tie was of less importance to him than the professional one. Immutability was his guiding principle; his period was every period; his religious belief in the hierarchy to which he belonged made him a monk, an ascetic, and under certain circumstances a fanatic. It was said of Herr von Andergast—at least, his colleagues praised him for it—that his strong sense for facts had triumphed over the most difficult and obscure cases, and had won him an authoritative prestige which had not been shaken by any changes or innovations in the administration. This was easy to understand. Why should anyone be shaken by external matters who was so unshakable within himself?

4

It was half-past nine. Herr von Andergast took out his gold hunter. Etzel rose. He made his bow, said good night, and turned to the door with his accustomed gesture of flight. There he hesitated. He glanced at the wall, and asked, quickly and shyly: "Who is this Maurizius, father?"

Herr von Andergast remained standing on the threshold of his study door. "Why do you want to know?" he asked, measuring his son with a cold glance.

"Oh . . . only . . ." replied Etzel, "it's because . . ." he hesitated.

He had asked Rie too. She had thought a while and had shaken her head. And thereupon he determined to ask other people, as many people as possible, and above all his grandmother, with whom he was to have lunch the day after to-morrow, as he did every Sunday. He remembered that the man with the seaman's cap had pronounced his name with a sort of consciousness of fame, almost as if one should say: "My name is Bismarck"; though not triumphantly, but rather sullenly. The tone still lingered in his ear.

"That is in no case a subject which we two can discuss," said Herr von Andergast, and rose, like an inaccessible tower in a frosty cloud.

"I would like to write to her once," murmured Etzel as he walked up and down in his room. He saw a field in front of him; beyond it was a wooded hill with the setting sun above it; the ground was bent like the back of a giant. There was an itching in his throat.

He sat down, and tearing a sheet of paper out of one of his exercise-books, he wrote: "There is a great deal going on, and I think over things a great deal. It's frightful that I don't even know you. Where are you really? It may be that some day I shall get into a train and come to you. Perhaps during the holidays. You may perhaps laugh over this schoolboy plan. Naturally, if I let out anything about this resolution it would all be over. Why, I

ask? There are, however, many questions to be answered. A boy of my age seems to have his hands and feet bound with ropes. Who knows? Perhaps, when the cord is finally cut, one is already lame and tame? That is probably the purpose. One is to be tamed. Have they made you tame also? Can you not tell me what I ought to do so that we can see one another? I will do whatever you like, only it must remain a secret. You understand. He always finds out everything. This letter must remain an absolute secret. Of course, I am getting older with time. But the slowness of the process is enough to drive one mad. They will not succeed in taming me. Do you know, when I saw that letter in the hall it was as if lightning had struck my brain. I wish I could realize what's the matter. I think you know what I mean. I have the feeling that you have had an injustice done you. Is that so? I simply must tell you that the injustices one hears of every day are simply frightful. You must know that injustice to me is the most horrible thing in the world. I can't give you any idea of my feelings when I experience injustice, whether towards myself or others; it's just the same. It goes right through me. It makes my body and soul ache; it is as if one had poured my mouth full of sand, and I must choke on the spot."

He paused. He realized with dismay that he was writing to himself, or to a person of his own invention, not to a real person. He could not even post the letter. He had no address. He had neglected to look at the back of the envelope from Geneva. Furthermore, it was to be feared that his father would find out about it, as he did about everything that Etzel did. As a child he had imagined that his father sat at the centre of the universe, recording all the sins and trespasses of all the townspeople on a marble tablet with a graving-chisel. Remnants of this faith still clung to him; and from this image he still created imaginary scenes and conversations. His father was in the room with him, a dominating presence. Like a magician, he had the power of passing through closed doors. In his capacity of magician, Etzel had given him the name of Trismegistos. Always, when he thought of his father in his punitive function, he called him so.

The dialogue between them was something after this fashion: *Trismegistos*: "Etzel, where are you?"—"Here I am."—"Why do you hide from me?"—"I am not hiding, I have only taken the mask from my face."—"What! You have the audacity to appear before me without a mask?"—"Why, when a person is alone, father, he does not need a mask."—"But I can see into you! I am surprised, I am very much surprised! I am sorry to have seen you without a mask!"

He folded the letter, put it into an envelope, and wrote upon it: "To my mother; I don't know where." He placed it in a secret compartment which he had made for himself in the drawer of his work-table, in which there were other papers, notes, records, and poems, and, as special treasures, two letters which he had received from Melchior Ghisels. Then he sat down, his chin in his hands, his elbows resting on the table. He should have gone to bed long ago, but there was an unrest within him which could not be quieted. From the street there resounded a long shrill whistle. The rain beat upon the trees. He jumped up, walking restlessly to and fro, and came to a standstill in front of his book-shelves. Every single book was a friend. He had bought them gradually, one by one, with his pocket-money, or he had got his grandmother to give them to him; some were presents from his father. The place of honour was occupied by the writings of his beloved Melchior Ghisels: four handsomely-bound volumes with an inscription from the author in his own hand. This man was to him a god, and every sentence in the books a revelation. Only at sixteen can one thus reverence an author. Only an unruffled spirit can harbour such a passion. The admiration with which Etzel regarded the man and his work was mingled with affection; Ghisels, an author as profound as Kierkegaard, was to him a prophet and a leader. Often, before falling asleep, he would read half a page of a chapter which he had read ten times already, slowly and with breathless reverence, and then putting out the light would quickly fall asleep with a smile. He did not know Ghisels personally. He had written to him, once, when he had asked him for the inscription, and a second time, very shyly,

to inquire the meaning of a difficult passage in a beautiful essay on the periods of life. Thielemann, Robert's father, who dealt in books, had given him the address, and since he knew that Ghisels lived in Berlin that city had become a Mecca to him. He was jealous of Melchior Ghisels, as one may be jealous of a treasure, and it filled him with satisfaction that his writings were known only to a few. Noisy fame, which indeed his work was little qualified to achieve, would perhaps have disenchanted him. Camill Raff had been the first to introduce him to this realm of higher thought; the previous summer, when he had been ill, the Doctor had come to see him, and had brought him a book of Ghisels', out of which he had read to him the whole of one afternoon.

He took one of Ghisels' books from the shelf, and lying on the floor face downwards, opened it, and began to read. It was only when he lay thus that he could concentrate fully on what he was reading. But after a while his hand ceased to turn the pages; his forehead fell forward on his arm; he stretched out his legs and slept. He did not wake until two in the morning, when he looked about him in some perturbation, jumped up, hastily threw off his clothes, turned off the light, and slipped noiselessly into bed. With his head already buried in the pillow he murmured to himself a few words of surprise and excuse, and in sleepy embarrassment, like a ten-year-old urchin, stuck out his tongue at himself.

5

The widow of General Andergast was an almost obsolete type of feminine "character". She was seventy-three, but she did not look her age. She was a small woman, and extremely vivacious; indeed, a little impetuous. Her features were lively, and she had quick, bright, inquiring eyes, over which, when she was alone, she wore a green paper shade, as her sight was weak. She had the bright clear voice of a young girl. She had been a widow for twenty years; after the death of her husband, a miserable tyrant and hypochondriac, she had begun to live; she had travelled far,

had been to Syria and India, and had spent several months with a married cousin in South America. She knew the world, and had many artistic interests; her favourite occupation was painting. In spite of her poor eyes she spent an hour each day in her studio, where she painted, with devoted patience, modest and tasteful pictures in the style of the French impressionists. If anyone spoke of her pictures, or asked to see them, she blushed like a young girl, and quickly turned the conversation. She did not get on well with her son, the attorney-general. He was too eager for power, and in this respect reminded her unpleasantly of her dead husband. Since he obviously, though silently, disapproved of her unconventional attitude to society, her carelessness about money, and her complete indifference to matronly dignity, she was always afraid of him, and breathed a sigh of relief when he took his leave of her, ceremoniously kissing her hand. "I can't appear before a moral tribunal every day and give an account of myself; I am too faulty a person and too nervous for that," she would sigh, when he quietly and respectfully reproached her for some impetuous action, or some offence against the social code. Since his divorce from his wife, moreover, she had felt even more profoundly displeased with him than before, because of his formality and his kill-joy principles. The matter had never been discussed between them, but Herr von Andergast was under no illusion in this respect, and he always took due note of any failure on the part of others to declare themselves completely in agreement with him and his behaviour. The old lady had not forgiven him the harshness with which he had condemned his wife, the mother of his child, to a spiritual death. The reports which one received of her described her as pining away abroad. The power had been entirely in his hands, and he had used it to the very utmost; of course, with a conscientious observance of the law, which had been on his side. Whether the *Generalin* had felt any real sympathy for Sophia von Andergast before the divorce is doubtful, but she certainly did so afterwards, and long after Sophia had left the city she spoke of her with undisguised compassion; one day, indeed, in the drawing-room of an acquaint-

ance, she went so far as to express her indignation at the cruelty of depriving a mother of all intercourse with her child, and of making so merciless a rule unalterable and irrevocable. Those present did not know where to look. Her remarks had caused quite a little scandal, though they had, as a matter of fact, been provoked by the tactless observations of a young barrister, who either out of shabby servility, or because he was a born martinet, could not sufficiently praise Herr von Andergast's "resolution". Of course, the affair had become to some extent public, and had given rise to the usual gossip. The term "resolution" in particular had exasperated the old lady until she was almost beside herself with anger. Having spoken her mind, very erect and with sparkling eyes, she picked up her shawl and her little bag, and forthwith left the disconcerted company, who could not for a long time decide whether to admire the old lady for her courage or to smile at her eccentricity. Two days later Herr von Andergast paid his mother a visit. He made no reference to this scene, or to any other expression of her opinions, or to Sophia, or to the divorce; yet after a brief discussion he received from her a solemn promise that she would never speak of Etzel's mother to the boy, and would not even mention her existence. This was a triumph of his tactical method. He had on that occasion so intimidated her that she had kept her promise to this day, although it had sometimes been extremely difficult to do so, when the charming boy was sitting at her feet, confidentially chattering and plying her with questions.

Etzel's presence as a guest on Sunday involved a beautifully-appointed table in a well-heated room. For herself alone the widow took little trouble; sometimes she forgot to eat at all, and then, towards evening, she would feel hungry, and send the maid—whom she had employed in scratching the paint off her old canvases instead of in cooking—across the street for a couple of sandwiches; and as she ate them she would trip tirelessly round the room, talking and humming to herself. To Etzel his grandmother was a stimulating creature. To his mind she had more of "the mysterious" about her than most of the people with whom

he came into contact. What he called "the mysterious" was his standard of value for people. Everyone, even the most boring, the most insignificant person had something hidden and impenetrable about him, which began to operate the moment he left Etzel's presence. He would wonder what people were doing now that they were abandoned to their "mystery"? Particularly he used to think about people in a state of solitude. How did this or that person behave when he was alone; what did he look like? One could never find out, for the eye that observes a human creature shatters the mystery merely by looking at him. Of Trismegistos, for example, Etzel conceived a fancy that he sat with a compass, drawing big circles on a drawing-board, and filling the circles with figures. Of his grandmother he could imagine that she, defying the laws of gravity, would walk about the ceiling head downwards; or when she was out of doors and, of course, quite unobserved, she would rise daintily into the air, like a balloon. This was her "mystery"—this was what was impenetrable in her.

6

Towards the end of the meal Etzel brought out the question which he had wanted to ask his grandmother. He had not seen the man with the seaman's cap again, but his thoughts were none the less often busy with him. It would not do to assume, however, that his grandmother would know the man's name. She was usually muddled about names; even those of the families with which she associated, and this peculiarity of hers had often been a source of bewilderment. Far from regarding it as an embarrassing defect, she was tickled to death when she mixed up dignitaries and celebrities of entirely different families. The maid Nanny, who had been in her service for fourteen years, was called by a different name every day: Bertha, Elise, Babette, or whatever came into her head, for she was always the creature of the moment, and with amiable irresponsibility refused to be tied down. Nevertheless, Etzel put a brief question, and, in order to assume an appearance of indifference, in order to make the

question seem unimportant, he examined the silver salt-cellar with feigned curiosity, as though it were a boat to which he was going to entrust himself for a lengthy voyage.

Maurizius: the name did not seem unfamiliar to the *Generalin*. She laid down her dessert-knife, rested her hands on her hips, and wrinkling up her forehead, which gave her rather a crazy expression, she too gazed at the salt-cellar. It was a name that emerged from a darkness. When one spoke it, or heard it, one felt a breath of cold and mildewed air, as though a cellar door had been opened. Something evil recurred to one's memory; forgotten faces recovered their outlines, and automatically evoked the horror which had once weighed on the city, on the province, and indeed on the whole country. It was as though the iridescent scum of a sunken swamp was to come swirling to the surface at the careless stroke of a spade. "What does it matter to you, boy?" she asked indignantly. "How does it concern you? How did you come across the name? The story is no longer real, it's so long ago. It was many, many years ago. How did you come to know of it?"

Etzel saw what an impression the name had made on the old lady. "What is it, then?" he whispered, mechanically rubbing the palms of his hands, which he had thrust between his knees. "Do tell me, grandmother, what it all was, and then I'll tell you why I want to know."

"It's impossible to tell you," the widow assured him. She had already said that it was many years ago. "Wait a minute; let me think. Your grandfather was already dead. It must have been during my first year of mourning; perhaps a little later. Not much later, for a year and a half after his death I went to the East. That was eighteen years ago; two years before you were born. How should I still be able to tell you about it after eighteen years? What is it that interests you so about the matter?"

Etzel did not reply, but after a while he asked, still more softly: "Was my father involved? Involved, of course, is a silly expression, but you know what I mean." Anxiously he fastened his glance upon the salt-cellar, which had changed into an ocean

steamer, and was already, as it were, nearing the dock, ready to take its passengers aboard. "Your father? Yes . . . I think . . ." was the hesitating reply, which had a slight undertone of malice. "I think he was. He was already attorney-general; and I have an idea that it was this affair which first made him really prominent. I could scarcely be mistaken about that; yes, I'm pretty sure; he distinguished himself greatly on that occasion; but for *him*, Maurizius would have got off unpunished in the end." She was silent, toyed with the ruffle of her sleeve, and gave a little embarrassed laugh; at this moment she was amazingly like Etzel, her junior by fifty-seven years.

But Etzel pressed her again and again. With exquisite cunning he pretended that the burning desire for knowledge which flooded his whole being, a desire kindled by an apparition and struggling towards an uneasily divined goal, was mere boyish curiosity. He moved his chair nearer to the window, took her hand, and placed it on his cheek. At the same time he pleaded with his lips and eyes. The old lady tossed her head in surprise. "I tell you, boy, you are absolutely crazy!" she scolded. "It seems to me that you've been sneaking off to the picture-theatre, and have lost your head over the silly things they show there. They say there are boys who run quite wild after seeing them. However, between ourselves, I go myself sometimes; but don't give me away. Now don't look at me so desperately. I am just trying to remember what I still know of the matter. With the best will in the world I can't remember it all. Such an old head as mine is a sieve with great holes in it. I won't ask you from what your interest springs; I might not be pleased if you told me. Very well, then: it was a frightful affair. People spoke of nothing else for weeks. All the clubs and cafés were taking sides about it. There were public meetings, and the troops had to be called out on the day the death-sentence was pronounced. I was over at Homburg at the time, and I remember the doctor forbade me to read the papers. Even when the case was long over, and Maurizius—what was his Christian name?—I have forgotten—and Maurizius's sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life, that was not

the end of the affair. There were many who absolutely refused to believe that he was guilty. Perhaps only because he himself insisted to the last moment that he was innocent. And then, he was not a common criminal. No, he was not that. He was a learned man, and many people declared that he was an authority on his own subject. Others, again, called him a windbag. At all events, in spite of his youth—he was, I think, only twenty-five—he had attained a respectable position as an art critic. I even had a little book that he wrote. I must look for it some time; it's certain to be in one of the cases in the garret. Now I remember the title: *The Influence of Religion on the Plastic Arts in the Nineteenth Century*. It interested me at the time; religion, art—people were chattering about them in all the drawing-rooms. Who could regard such a man as an assassin? I could never quite believe that he was capable of murder. To shoot his own wife in the back, from an ambush! And under such circumstances! It was a confused story. A god-forsaken, pitiful story, and of course I no longer remember how it went. I only know that everything was against him; persons, things, space and time. A flawless piece of circumstantial evidence, as the lawyers call it. The bringing together of this evidence was actually your father's work; that I remember well. He was very proud of his work, young and ambitious as he was. A bell-founder could not be prouder of the success of a difficult casting. He certainly had every reason to be pleased, for it was, I suppose, much harder than casting a bell. Old Geheimrat Demme, who was anything but a fool, told me once that to a criminologist a nice clear case of circumstantial evidence was what the correct calculation of the path of a comet was to an astronomer. I can understand that. To succeed in making an action speak more truly than the person who has committed it—that's no trifling matter."

Etzel sat and stared. The man with the seaman's cap was becoming more and more of a puzzle. Since he could not possibly be the Maurizius who was condemned to spend his life behind the walls of a prison, Etzel must find out in what relation he stood to him. What did the man want of him—why did he place

himself in his path and stare at him with his evil squinting eyes? Had he instructions to deliver, or a message? What kind of message? Did he perhaps want to win him, Etzel, as an intermediary between himself and Trismegistos? To get him to spy on Trismegistos? A frightful business! Here, if anywhere, there was a mystery. One must be careful. One must be on one's guard. Every smallest sign was of importance. While he sat thinking thus, his face grew paler and paler, till it gleamed like mother-of-pearl. Something began to tremble in the depths of his being, and he ducked his shoulders as though under the threat of a blow.

"What's the matter, boy?" his grandmother cried sharply. "I haven't liked the look of you for some time!" She rose lightly, patted Etzel's cheek, and when he got up she slipped her arm under his and went with him into the sitting-room. There she lit a cigarette, and handed one to Etzel, in a matter-of-course way, as though he were her familiar friend and shared all her habits. Then she took his arm again, and walked up and down the great room with him. "Now, confess," she began: "What the matter? What makes you look like a shorn sheep? Are you having trouble at school? Last autumn it looked as if you were going to stand at the head of your class. Frankly, I don't place much value on that. Model pupils don't make model people. Swotting doesn't make for genius. Genius is industry, say the Germans. They might like to have it so. I think a good deal of you; you are my only grandchild, and I am your only grandmother; if you had half a dozen brothers and sisters, I might perhaps have selected another among them than just yourself; you are a little too crafty and a little too dreamy for my taste. One must have a lot in here"—and she pointed to his breast—"if one has so much back there"—she pinched the lobe of his ear. "But all the same, I love you, only I am sometimes worried and afraid when I look at you."

She is a wonderful woman, thought Etzel. He smiled across at her—they were almost the same height—stopped short in his walk, and using the remnant of his smile to diminish the im-

portance of the question, he asked: "Tell me, grandmother, where is my mother, and why am I told nothing about her?"

It would be idle to seek to follow the complicated train of thought which had induced him to make such an onslaught on the widow's peace of mind. Perhaps it had its origin in the man with the seaman's cap, and in the region on whose outskirts he had been wandering since he had heard his grandmother's story: perhaps it was a natural process, emerging, in a natural manner, as one of the piers over which the bridge of his destiny ran. In any case, the old lady grew rigid with terror, and found him once more extraordinarily impertinent. Her expression betrayed her extreme irritation. Without a doubt, he was abusing her patience. It was only to worry her that he had prepared such a budget of questions. Nothing was so distasteful to her as having question after question flung at her. One to-day, another to-morrow, next day a third—so far she was willing; but a whole bombardment at once was beyond all bounds! Apart from that, she had eaten so much that she would have to rest; she must not gossip so much after eating; she felt oppressed if she did, and couldn't sleep at night. Etzel was a good little boy, and now he was going home. Let him give her love to his father, and remember her to Ric. Good-bye!—Then, with a certain superfluity of words and movement, she pushed him into the hall, took his head between her slender cool hands, kissed him on his forehead and his eyes, with her comically pouting lips, and closed the door noisily behind him.

CHAPTER III

I

DOCTOR RAFF seized the opportunity to talk to Robert Thielemann about Etzel. He was worried. Etzel was falling off disturbingly in his work. His lack of punctuality, his absent-mindedness, had given much cause for complaint of late. This had been hinted to Etzel, but the hint had not made any impression on him.

"It's a pity," said Dr. Raff, as they strolled up and down the corridor. "I should be sorry to have to take any measures about it. I don't like taking measures. What's the matter with him? Don't you know?"

Thielemann's chin protruded like a beak over his crumpled stand-up collar. The question flattered him; that he was unable to give an answer angered him; for about a week Etzel had avoided him no less than the rest of his schoolfellows. He admitted this hesitatingly. "I don't thrust myself upon him," he growled; "so far as I am concerned he can do as he pleases. Perhaps I am not distinguished enough for him, and he's been told as much at home."

"Tush, Thielemann!" said Camill Raff.

The unkempt-looking youth ran his ten fingers through the shock of his red hair.

His irritable contempt was intended only to cover his wounded feelings. "Perhaps the old man has got wind of my being politically—well, how shall I put it in a word?—not quite clean and domesticated. At least, for the Baron's nostrils."

Dr. Raff repressed an ironical smile. "Heaven help us, these are our Marats and Saint-Justs!" he thought. "I am very sorry about it," he insisted, with his Swabian accent; "very sorry indeed. I thought he had some confidence in me. He used always to be quite frank and open with me. Now he's different. One must try to discover why. Perhaps you'll find some opportunity of drawing him out a little. Only don't be defiant, Thielemann. At the moment you are in the stronger

position, because he's in the wrong. Keep in touch with him." He nodded to Thielemann and walked off. From behind he looked as though he himself were still a student, small, slight and supple. Thielemann's eyes followed him irritably. "No defiance! That's all very well!" he growled to himself. "Shall I throw my arms round his neck? Fall on my knees and beg to be allowed to come to see him? He can wait a long time for that, he and his Andergast! He seems to be very keen on him all of a sudden!"

Boys of this age have their inviolable conventions of intercourse. These are observed all the more strictly for having emerged without discussion or agreement. Their origin is for the most part as tenuous and obscure as their observation is matter of fact. It was a tacit understanding of this kind that Etzel should never go to Thielemann's house, but that Robert should visit Andergast, and never unless Etzel invited him. Etzel had been only a few times to the Thielemann bookshop. Now and again Robert had suggested a visit, but only to keep up appearances. The fact of the matter was that he did not really wish Etzel to come, that he even dreaded such a visit. He had no room of his own at his disposal. He shared the room in which he slept and worked with two younger brothers, with whom he did not get on well. That, however, was not the worst of it. There was no peace in the home in which he lived. There was constant strife between his mother and father. They offered their children the sorry spectacle of a husband and wife who could not be in the same room for two minutes together without making bitter remarks and reproaches to one another. The thought that Etzel might some day see and hear them wrangling was unendurable to Robert. This to some extent explained the inequality of their mutual relations. It was further explained by a sense of social inferiority, which was doubly wakeful and sensitive in a spirit which was naturally rebellious. The revolutionary temper of a boy often has its roots in a disorderly household. In many middle-class homes delicacy and tenderness have been dead for generations. A heart must be rarely endowed if

an unsatisfied hunger for affection does not make it thirst for revenge. Such hearts are not common.

2

Etzel had discovered the petition of old Maurizius in his father's study. It was a petition for pardon. Peter Paul Maurizius, retired farmer and landowner, residing in Hanau, 17 Market-strasse, requested the attorney-general to make application for and recommend the pardoning of his son, Otto Leonhardt Maurizius, imprisoned for the past eighteen years and five months in the penitentiary at Kressa. Thus ran the superscription of the document. Etzel disposed of the humiliating consciousness that he had lowered himself by prying, by a quibble. He was keenly aware that the stealthy method which he had chosen to employ was dishonourable, but he justified it by the circumstances, which had left him no choice. Like an animal, he had followed the trail by scent. The man with the seaman's cap had played his part, like the ghost in *Hamlet*. "Just look about carefully at home," his insistent, malicious little eyes had said: "look about, and you'll find something!" And whenever they did so Etzel thought of the letter from Switzerland. He would have liked to read the letter; secretly he hoped to find it in some drawer or folder. "Look about and you'll find something": the thought gave him no peace. The imperious hand of Trismegistos appeared to him in the night, gleaming plastically in the darkness. The image of the chest of dynamite in the cellar constantly approximated to the reality. But there were even more distressing symptoms. A haunting spirit of pedantry emanated from the papers and Blue books with which his father's desk was laden, and spread through all the rooms of the house. Documentary phantoms had long been haunting the Andergast house, audible only to Etzel's ears; a nameless, shadowy, rustling folk, perceptible to no eyes but his, which at times saw shadows more plainly than real bodies. His sensitiveness in this regard had in it something of hysteria. There was a danger that his constant preoccupation with hidden and secret things would fill his mind

with obsessions. But since he was a human being, with a spark of the divine in his soul (though God alone knew whence it came), growing up in these surroundings, where human errors and crimes of every kind and degree were arraigned in atrocious numbers—where a monstrous and inexorable hand dragged the guilty down the path of expiation—it was impossible that he should be unvisited by such visions. Perhaps these phantoms already stood about his cradle, and had lulled him to sleep with their lamentations. The very essence of destiny hung over this house; and how was he, a membrane stretched between the light and the darkness of the world, not to become conscious of it?

So he wandered from room to room of the quiet house, compelled by the inflexible gaze of those malicious, astigmatic little eyes; tormented by a name, tormented by an undefined and legendary deed, which lurked, hidden and menacing, behind the name, like a slimy mollusc behind the dark glass of an aquarium. He wandered again and again from room to room. It was a late afternoon towards the end of March; his father had telephoned that he was not coming home that evening; Hilde Sydow had announced her engagement, and he had had his dress-clothes taken to the office. Etzel must somehow divert Rie's attention, must keep her occupied. With unusual cunning he brought her his running-shorts, pointing to a large triangular rent, and appealing to her art in darning; and at the same time he coaxed her to make apple fritters for dinner, since the two of them would be alone. He knew that she would make them herself; she wouldn't let the cook do that; she had a special recipe; moreover, she was glad that the boy, who had recently shown but little appetite, should come to her to ask for some such delicacy. "Yes, I will certainly do that, my boy," she said, and was thus made harmless for a couple of hours. Thoughtfully Etzel stood in the sitting-room; outside the twilight was beginning to fall; a strip of sky, like a pennant of pink and grey, glowed through the window; the closed door of his father's study drew him on; he opened it and walked into the room with its dark, smoky wall-paper, and its disgusting odour of stale cigars,

and remained rooted before the piles of documents. Pile upon pile, they lay there in green and blue folders, each cover bearing a white oval shield with a neatly written label. He had never yet dared to open such a folder; but now he opened the cover of the topmost folder;—the words “Petitions for Pardon” were written on the oval shield, and the first thing on which his glance fell was the name Maurizius. Such accidents are natural phenomena, elemental, and conditioned by law.

In the arguments of the retired farmer and landowner there was hardly anything of the humility of a petitioner. A sullen, dogmatic tone was apparent. There were references to previous references to alleged errors in the procedure of the trial. Very obviously the reasoning was that of a layman. The petition seemed to have been written without the assistance of a lawyer, perhaps because professional advice had so often proved fruitless, and because the writer wanted in the end to achieve his goal by virtue of his own logic. Hence the unadorned phraseology. What finally emerged was far removed from logic; it was a passionate statement, an obstinate reversion to the same point, which was repeated as though someone were knocking in the dark upon a closed door, with a convulsive impetuosity that seemed to have its roots in a delusion. At two points the name Waremmé was mentioned. One could see that he appeared as a witness for the crown. The writer did not dare to charge him openly with perjury, but one could read the accusation between the lines. More than that, it sounded as though this perjury was a thing long admitted, a fact no longer denied by anyone; whereas it might have no existence except in the sick imagination of the writer. If the judicial authorities—so the petition continued—should decide to re-examine the statements of this Gregor Waremmé, there might be even to-day, after almost nineteen years, valid reasons for reopening the case. Perhaps then a different light would be thrown on a certain lady, the most unfortunate of all unfortunate women, whom it was superfluous to name. The words “most unfortunate of all unfortunate women” were twice underlined, and provided with two exclama-

tion points in brackets, from which fact alone one could see how little the author understood the art of composing an irreproachable legal document. The attorney-general had already written under it in red pencil: "Not a case for pardon. Andergast." The retired farmer and landowner had no conception of how to ingratiate himself; ten lines farther on he had declared himself ready to tell the court where the witness Waremmé, who was believed to have disappeared, was now living, thus betraying the fact that he had been playing the detective on his own account. Such amateur meddling was hardly calculated to add to his credibility in the eyes of the competent authorities.

At the close, moreover, he indulged in a flight of theatrical rhetoric. Was this Peter Paul Maurizius perhaps a religious crank, who naïvely imagined that he could make an impression on a Prussian court of law by solemn invocations in Biblical language? Apart from the absurdity of the assumption, there was nevertheless an unmistakable note of truth in this bombastic appeal; at all events, of subjective truth; and this made Etzel feel like Hamlet when the spirit of his father addressed him from the bowels of the earth. "Speak, poor ghost!" he said, in sorrowful dismay. The words engraved themselves on his mind; he knew that he would never forget them; he could recite them by heart; if he were dragged from his bed at midnight and asked for them he would repeat them mechanically like some passage which he had learned by heart from the Gallic Wars: "By God and His holy angels it is a guiltless man who for more than eighteen years has mouldered alive in the stony tomb of a penitentiary. He did not commit the deed for which he was sentenced, and even though he had confessed it a hundred times (and he never has confessed it), and no matter how damnably the circumstantial evidence may speak against him, he was guiltless when his life was broken off in its full flower, guiltless when he took upon himself the yoke of atonement, and that I will announce to the world, and for that I will vouch so long as there is a breath of life in my breast."

"Speak, poor ghost." . . .

3

They were foolish tricks to which Etzel resorted during the days that followed, in order to deceive those who were observing him. With the same expenditure of energy and guile he might have remained a satisfactory pupil, instead of so falling off in his work that his masters could only shake their heads over him. But that was just what he could not do. All that he had been, up to a certain hour of a certain day, seemed to him now outworn and useless. Something had taken place within him for which he himself lacked a comparison and a measure. A few days after the conversation between Dr. Raff and Thielemann the Easter holidays had begun; and so he gained time, and was able for a while to withdraw his behaviour from public criticism. All he had now to do was to delude his father and Rie by pretending to be careless, alert and good-humoured. As he walked along the hall he sang a little song to himself, and in his room he could be heard humming a tune; when he met Rie he laughed at her pleasantly, and if she asked him a question he answered gaily. When he was with his father he assumed a particularly willing and docile manner of listening to him, a trick of eager, cordial agreement, of mutely applauding him with sparkling eyes, of breathing an intent: "Yes—no—I see—thank you!" so that it seemed impossible that he should be cherishing intentions which were utterly inconsistent with this hypocritically courteous and filial behaviour. Even a person so profoundly familiar with human failings and surprising lapses of character as Herr von Andergast would have regarded the mere suggestion as a ridiculous slander. After all, if it were not for the fact that the impossible is constantly occurring, we should all of us at all times be prepared for the possible, and life would be a simple matter. For the present everything was still in the germ; perhaps the boy himself did not yet know very much about it; what I have just described as hypocritical was the result of a decision to attain to clarity by his own efforts, to illumine the darkness with his intelligence, and to keep clear of loose thinking and

foolish enthusiasm. But in spite of all his "orientation towards intellectual freedom", as he expressed it with his naïve scientific aridity, he could not keep himself from sinking, during school hours, into deep waters, and becoming submerged in them, in spite of his "clarifying" ideas. He could not help it; sitting half the day on a bench, and adjusting himself obediently to a present which suddenly seemed to afford him no more space than a pea would fill, was finally more than he was able to bear. Even in a pea, he thought, he would have been less confined than in these rooms, among these people, while such a tremendous task was germinating within him. And so it came about that in the street he would walk pedantically along the curb of the pavement, keeping strictly to the line, simply because he wanted to smother his "thinking", because "thinking" was really taking him nowhere. He would count the trees in an avenue; an even number would mean "*wait*", and uneven, "*no time to be lost*". But wait for what? Lose no time in regard to what? What ought he to do? How was he to begin? What indeed was there to be done at all? Who was there who knew anything about it? From whom could he get advice? In whom could he confide? Who was there who would not laugh, who would not burst out laughing and say: "Nonsense, boy, what's got hold of you? What are you thinking of? You must be crazy; your brains are addled!" Really, seriously, who was there to whom he could turn? It was conceivable that a really noble young woman would understand what he was driving at, would understand the decision to which he was being slowly, inevitably, necessarily impelled. But he didn't know any really noble young woman. The world which he knew contained no divinities of this kind, and such women and girls as he encountered—for his grandmother was sexless—were as contemptible to him as the wax figures in the hairdresser's window. It was in this respect a poor world, a masculine world, in which there was no Orpheus to wrest Eurydice from Hades and Persephone. And yet one must have help, support, advice, practical assistance, or everything would be utterly senseless, would come to an end before it had properly begun. And Etzel walked up

and down his room, his left fist clenched against his breast, his right hand sunk in his trousers pocket, jingling his pocket-knife and keys like a bank clerk. He was pondering the matter; his brain was alight; it was working in images, although what he asked of it should have evoked only logical thoughts. He did not always succeed, however, in compelling his mental machinery to perform its natural function. He calculated that eighteen years and five months meant two hundred and twenty-one months, or approximately six thousand six hundred and thirty days and six thousand six hundred and thirty nights. One must make a distinction; days were one thing, nights another. But at this point of his arithmetical exercise he could no longer see nor understand; there remained only figures, which said nothing. It was as though he were standing in front of an ant-hill, and trying to count the crawling insects. He tried to imagine what it meant; six thousand six hundred and thirty days; to form a conception of it. He thought of a house with six thousand six hundred and thirty steps; no, too difficult. A box of matches with six thousand six hundred and thirty matches; no, hopeless. A bag of money with six thousand six hundred and thirty pennies; no, he couldn't get it. A train with six thousand six hundred and thirty cars; it wouldn't become real. A book with six thousand six hundred and thirty leaves—they must be leaves, not pages, for then the two sides of every leaf would correspond to a day and a night. Here he could get some conception of the thing; he took a pile of books from the bookcase; the first had a hundred and fifty leaves, the second a hundred and twenty-five, the third two hundred and ten; none of them had more than two hundred and sixty. He had over-estimated their contents; he piled twenty-three volumes on top of one another, and then he had four thousand two hundred and twenty leaves. Then he stopped with amazement in his eyes. And to think that every day that was passing for him meant one day more in that other place! His own life consisted of barely five thousand nine hundred days, and how long it seemed to him, how slowly it went by! A week was often like a tedious march along a highway;

and there were days that stuck to one's body like pitch; one couldn't get rid of them. And all this time, while he was sleeping, reading, going to school, playing games, talking to people, and planning this and that; while winter was followed by spring, while the sun shone or the rain fell, while night gave way to morning, during all this *he* was there too, at the same time, *in* the same time: always, always, always there. Even before Etzel was born (how infinitely mysterious that word had suddenly become!) he was already there; he was there on the first day, the second day, the five-hundredth day, the two thousand two hundred and thirty-seventh day. Etzel made a gesture as though he were shaking off two iron hands that were clasping his shoulders; he gazed angrily, impatiently and wildly about him, seized an ebony ruler, and began "to conduct". This was one of his games. As a boy of eight he had been particularly fond of it; now he seldom thought of it, and only when he was ill at ease with himself, and unable to overcome a mood of depression. He regarded it as an atavism, a return to childhood, and after playing it he would feel depressed, as one would after a bout of drinking. His "conducting" consisted in his singing at the top of his voice a symphony, consisting of reminiscences of his own composition, of every possible sort of melody, imitating the woodwind, the kettle-drum and the brass, waving the ruler like a conductor's baton, with fire and conviction. He was the orchestra, he was the music, he was the conductor; and the passionate enthusiasm into which he sang and screeched himself finally brought Rie into the room; she warned him irritably to be quiet; she couldn't understand this childish nonsense, and drew his attention to the fact that his father might return at any moment. Covered with perspiration, very red in the face, the ruler still in his uplifted hand, he stared at her as though he did not recognize her, and then retorted, annoyed and embarrassed, "Shut the door, Rie; the hall is full of the smell of onions; it makes me feel sick."

4

On the following afternoon, about four o'clock—it was a Wednesday—he appeared unexpectedly at the Thielemann's house. He had himself shown into Robert's room, and suddenly stood before his astonished friend, who had not even heard him open the door. It was fortunate that Robert was doing his homework, for at such times he had the room to himself. It was a large, uncomfortable, five-cornered room, with two windows, which looked out into the narrow courtyard; it was therefore so dark that one had to switch on the light in the afternoon. Thielemann took some time to recover from his surprise; since Etzel had never yet entered the house, the situation was new to him, apart from the fact that he had some reason to be annoyed with him on account of his recent inexplicable conduct. Moreover, the atmosphere of the house was to-day stormy; Robert himself was not quite sure what was going on. At lunch his parents had sat in icy silence; not one of the three boys had dared to open his lips; after his last mouthful, Herr Thielemann had gone out, and his wife had gone up to her room without deigning to glance at the boys; and half an hour ago his father had returned, quite contrary to his usual custom, for he generally played billiards until half-past four, and then went to the shop. He was now in the sitting-room; now and again he left it, walked across the hall, and banged the door behind him; then all was quiet again, but Robert did not trust this quietness; he knew that a storm might break at any moment. It was embarrassing to have Andergast there on such a day; there were better days, when one wasn't sitting on hot coals. He could not think of anything to say; embarrassed, he looked for a blotter, and stuck his pen behind his ear; a habit which Etzel hated, because it made him look like a tailor's clerk; he had often told him so. But Robert had no mind to please Etzel. Matters were not to be as though nothing had been wrong between them. He blinked his eyes, and stared attentively at the electric bulb, which hung naked and unshaded by a length of flex from the ceiling. What

he could see of Etzel, as he cast a few sidelong glances at him, rather propitiated him. "The devil knows how the fellow does it," he thought; "he's no sooner in the room than one forgets one has anything against him!"

"Has anything happened?" he asked, while his glance wandered about the room as though he wanted to reassure himself that it did not make too objectionable an impression, and that the contrast with Etzel's own pleasant room was not as perceptible to Etzel as to himself. "Has anything happened?" he repeated: "you look a bit dishevelled for a fellow in your circumstances!" Already, involuntarily, the considerate affection which distinguished his relations to Etzel from those to any of his other companions betrayed itself in his voice, as he perceived to his own irritation.

Etzel drew a long breath. "I've been walking fast," he said, and seated himself somewhat shyly at the table opposite Robert. "I wanted to talk to you about something; that is, if you have the time. Not much; I haven't much myself; I must be home again by five. Only . . . it's a damnably ticklish matter. You must manage to keep your mouth shut, Thielemann. Can anyone hear us here?" He looked about him searchingly. The corners of his mouth twitched like those of a child whose toy has been broken, and to whom the world seems of a sudden to be hostile. It was always so with Etzel; whatever it was that had happened to him, and however mature and resolute his attitude might be, there was something about him that reminded one of a child of eight.

"Go ahead," said Robert, more uncertain than he cared to appear: "there aren't any listeners here." Etzel, with his hands pressed between his knees, was reflecting with a frown. He did not know how to begin. He bent forward, and lowering his voice, which was still immature, and masculine only in the middle register, he said that as a general thing he hated to think of fellows gossiping about their family affairs; that was the sort of thing girls did. But since at the moment he was in a difficult situation, and had no more intimate friend than Thielemann, he

had decided to appeal to him. Really he only wanted an answer to a question of conscience. He did not want Thielemann to do a lot of thinking and talking: he was just to say yes or no, he must be guided according to instinct. It was the question of his mother. It was a question of the relations, or rather the lack of relations, between his father and mother; the subject had recently become a source of painful conflict to himself. "Do you understand me, Thielemann?" he asked, with a bright, friendly glance. Robert winced. "I haven't the faintest notion," he murmured, moving as though he had suddenly found himself under the water-spout of a gutter. His expression became gloomy; he was not in the least prepared for such confidences, and to him they seemed ironical, for he himself was completely at the mercy of the rift in his own family, of the bitterness born of years of strife and division. His father and his mother, their hearts full of hatred, each despising, loathing and execrating the other, tried, in their blind misery, to induce their sons to take sides. He was troubled by the suspicion that Etzel knew of this undignified state of affairs, and was tempted thereby to unburden himself concerning the misery in his own family, in a spirit of pity, as it were; and his petty middle-class pride rebelled at this. So distorted were his sick thoughts; such was the confusion of his soul. It should be added, however, by way of excuse, that he was not particularly intelligent; he was only kind-hearted and easily moved. His eyes had a pitiful, hungry look as he gazed attentively at Etzel; he could not forget what was brewing outside that room, in his own home; but while he was trying to control his uneasy, listening absence of mind, his distrust of his friend disappeared, and the thought that Etzel spoke of the matter to-day for the first time suddenly moved him to tears. "I'll understand all right, youngster," he said; "just spit it out."

Etzel nodded. "Listen," he said. He did not know his mother. He had never heard from her directly, and his indirect information was of the scantiest. He did not even know her address; he knew only that she lived in Geneva, in Switzerland, or was

living there until recently. Whether she was well or sick, rich or poor, alone or not alone, he did not know. He did not know why he knew nothing about her, and was not expected to know. He did not know whether she was pretty or ugly, young or old. He had no portrait of her; nor even a mental image, since she had disappeared out of his life so long ago, and since all reminiscences of her, for some reason that he could not understand, had been obliterated; even all external tokens, such as photographs or painted portraits. There was nothing of that sort; she was, as it were, erased. Why? He could not cease asking, why? Assuredly she did not of her own accord give up all connection with him; but what could have compelled her to do so? Had she committed a crime? Had she some sense of guilt? But one had never heard of a mother leaving her child in the lurch and forgetting it for such a reason. Therefore his father must be at the back of it. To ask him was out of the question. Two seconds later, before one realized it, one would be out of the room. Rie was not to be thought of. His grandmother, it appeared, for some reason unknown to him, was compelled to be silent. Decency forbade him to ask anyone else. Thus there was a conspiracy about the matter, a regular plot. The centre of this plot, or understanding, or whatever one liked to call it, was his father. It was he who had taken these measures; he held the threads in his hands. He eliminated what did not suit him, whether knowledge, inquiry or investigation. That was what he was like; that was what he decreed; and because he had the power, that was how things were. Etzel regarded this as an injustice to himself. He was undecided whether to accept this understanding any longer. At times he seemed to feel an inner command to break the barrier by which he was surrounded; it even seemed that he must do so, in order to establish the balance which was lacking in his life. He made a singularly intelligent comparison. He had the feeling, he said, that up to the present he had played only one part of a musical composition, the bass; he knew well enough that he would never hear both hands playing simultaneously, but he would like

to be able to hear the right hand play just once, so that he could at least combine the two mentally. The difficulty was that he would not care to deceive his father; he did not want to behave like a cad; he recognized his duty as a son; obedience and duty, up to a certain point, were something more than empty words. His father had taken care of him in his way; probably he had, in his way, a certain affection for him; one couldn't just simply ignore him; he was too big for that, too important, too much himself.

"Now, tell me, Thielemann," said Etzel, getting up rather abruptly—and once more his eyes flashed their flickering bronze lights—"tell me what I must do. You are a just fellow; you feel and you think justly. And that's the point. Tell me: shall I regard myself as bound, shall I stick it until some day it suits him to tell me: this is so, and this, and that is so; now choose; go to the right, or go to the left, or stay where you are; at all events, now you know the time of day. But that will never be. He will never say that. All right. Shall I stop bothering about it, shall I go my own way and do . . . well, as to what's to be done, we need not go into that just now. What it will be I don't know just yet, but in such matters one has to be prepared. What do you advise me to do, Thielemann? Don't think about it. You know the game, of 'thumbs up', Thielemann; well, up with your thumb, and let's know the result."

This was a singularly illuminating exposition, sensible and eloquent. It had all the lucidity, all the fearless integrity of a young human being who refused to be cheated of one iota of his moral judgment. It was a question addressed, perhaps, not only to Robert Thielemann; he was, it may be, merely a pretext, a chance listener; it was addressed rather to his companions in general, to his environment, and finally to himself. The motive of the question was possibly the belief that if he could only state the problem correctly and concisely he could no longer be in doubt as to the solution. It was only a matter of finding the courage to face the problem; that was the real difficulty. Once to have faced the problem squarely meant for Etzel the attain-

ment of a buoyancy and a freedom of action which were no longer bound up with any particular question. This must be clearly emphasized, since Etzel's character, for all its charming simplicity, contained many invisible strata.

Robert Thielemann was in no hurry to answer. He got up awkwardly, walked round the table in his heavy boots, ran his fingers through his shock of red hair, grunted, and cleared his throat before he began to express himself: "There are two sides to that question; an emotional side and an intellectual side. Two horses that are not matched. I can't tell which horse will run better. You were, in a sense, born with a silver spoon in your mouth. Silk does not tear as easily as sackcloth. You're a very nice fellow, but you drag too many conventions about with you; or traditions, or whatever you like to call them."

Etzel was no longer listening. He was smiling silently. It was an intelligent, indulgent, disappointed smile. It was at the word "but" that he had begun to smile. As soon as anyone says "but" he's of no use to me, he thought; and sitting down again he took up a sheet of paper and a pencil, and drew a horse with a stag's antlers, pawing the air excitedly with his forefeet. Thielemann had the same feeling as when his Greek examination paper was returned to him marked "unsatisfactory". His forehead flushed red. "I'll tell you something," he said mysteriously, leaning over toward Etzel; "they keep us on short rations; that's the trick. And they haven't a ghost of an idea what's going on inside of us. We are moving forward, and they are still in the eighteenth century. They don't know what's in store for them. Everything's rotten and stinking. But they control the rations, and that gives them the control of the situation. I'd like to tear the whole thing to bits, like that!" He snatched the sheet of paper on which Etzel, still smiling, was scribbling, and angrily tore it in two.

At this moment a woman's voice was heard, screeching, and at the same time the furious shouting of a man. It lasted a bare three seconds; then a door was banged. There was silence for a moment, and then the door must have been opened again,

for the woman's voice was heard once more, even louder than before; half complaining, half upbraiding, rising in a shriek until it positively tripped itself up. The man replied, from a greater distance than before, with hideous threats and words of abuse. Etzel jumped up; he thought some calamity must have occurred. He wanted to go to the door, but Robert seized him by the shoulder, and holding him fast, with distorted features, whispered hoarsely, baring his teeth: "Don't move, or you'll have me to deal with!" So this was what he feared until he trembled at the thought of it; it was this that he had tried to hide as one hides a loathsome eruption; it was this that humiliated him and darkened his youth. He and Etzel were standing two paces from the door; he was still holding Etzel by the shoulder; his face was so pale that his freckles looked almost black, like specks of ink on a piece of parchment. Etzel, gazing on the floor, and listening to this revolting brawl, understood his friend's distress. He did not dare to look at Robert. Then the voices ceased as suddenly as though they had been stifled by a torrent of engulfing sand; there was silence for a quarter of a minute; and then someone began to play a waltz on a piano which was frightfully out of tune. There was nothing peculiar about this; it was one of Robert's brothers who was amusing himself in the sitting-room; but this particular sequence—the dreadful brawling, like a row in a tavern, followed immediately by the senseless waltz melody—showed such a lack of sensitiveness on the part of the player that Etzel could read the life-story of this family like an open book. He shook hands timidly with Robert and whispered: "I must go now, Thielemann; it's getting late; good-bye!" As he spoke he was already out of the room; he slipped shyly through the hall, and ran down the steps. "Mean of me to have run away," he thought, walking along Feyerleinstrasse in the rain, looking up at the sky with curling lips; "but if I had stayed longer he would not have liked that either."

He walked more slowly, sunk in thought. After a time he suddenly stopped and stood still. He pressed both his hands against his breast; his heart began to beat quickly, and he said

aloud: "It's no use; I shan't be able to rest until I have been out to see the old man in Hanau."

5

He wanted to go on Thursday, but postponed this visit until Friday because his father had to dine with some friends that evening. He told Rie that he was going to the cinema; would she please to put some sandwiches on his table; if he came home late she was not to give him away; in any case he would be back by eight. It was, however, almost nine before he returned, for he did not at once find Maurizius at home; in fact, he had had to return for a second time an hour later. One of the inmates of the house told him that the old man had gone to the Hare tavern round the corner; Etzel looked in through the windows, but could not see the man for whom he was looking. He patrolled the street in front of the long building in the Marktgasse, and it was fully six o'clock before he at last saw the man with the seaman's cap. The old man's rooms were on the courtyard; one had to go up a staircase like the ladder of a chicken-run, built against the outer wall, and on the first floor a narrow wooden gallery led to a door which opened directly into two uncomfortable rooms. Beside the door was a bell-pull, under which was a copper door-plate with the inscription, "P. P. Maurizius, retired landowner". When they had met in the street, Etzel had taken off his hat to him, but Maurizius had not returned the greeting; evidently he was seldom addressed; he probably had not many acquaintances in the city. Etzel followed him into the courtyard, and waited until he had disappeared along the gallery overhead; then he followed him, and knocked gently at the door; when there was no reply he pulled the door-bell, but he could not hear any sound; the bell itself seemed to be missing, so he knocked more loudly, and at last the old man opened the door. He looked at his visitor distrustfully. With his head uncovered he looked so changed that Etzel at first thought it was not the same man. His skull was so narrow that it reminded one of the butt-end of a gun, and a hideous red wen protruded

like an incandescent bulb through a few bristles of flour-white hair. It was uncertain, nor did Etzel learn later, whether at the first glance he recognized the young man whom he had followed about so obstinately for some days past. From his expression one could tell nothing. Etzel said: "I should like to speak to you," and the old man, without saying a word, invited him with a mumble and a wave of the hand to come into the room. Inside Etzel gave his name; Maurizius nodded, and seemed in no way astonished; one might have thought that Etzel was a daily visitor.

The old man pointed to a chair with his stiff left arm, took a tin tobacco-box from a drawer in the table, and began to fill his short pipe. There was nothing striking about the furnishings of the room; it was a lower middle-class room, containing a table, a bureau, a wardrobe, and a mirror hanging askew; all cheap department-store furniture. The only unusual thing in the room was a number of piles of old newspapers, which were stacked on plain deal shelves, with two or three dozen packages tied together with string, on the face of which were labels, on which was written, in blue pencil: 1905, 1906, 1907; Preliminary Investigation, Proceedings of the First Day, Proceedings of the Second Day, etc., Foreign Opinions, Legal Experts, Psychiatrists, etc. There were pamphlets, too; everything that had been printed concerning his son's crime and his trial.

"I have sent in another petition," began Maurizius, sitting down on the sofa, which was covered with black oil-cloth tacked on with white porcelain-headed nails, and convulsively drawing at his pipe: "so that the attorney-general's office shall not go to sleep. Of course, it's like spitting into the wind. Has anyone sent you, young man? Or have you come of your own accord? What the devil has prompted you to come? Years ago a lot of people came. Even in nineteen-nine it was often like a fashionable doctor's. Audiences given daily. Writers, lawyers, spiritualists, editors. Even Americans. For twelve or thirteen years there has been silence. Even battlefields are quiet when peace has been concluded, no matter how filthy a pretence of peace it may be.

What do you want, young gentleman? So far as I can see you are a deucedly young gentleman!"

His voice reminded one of the croaking of a crow, though he did not speak loudly, but he brought his words out a few at a time, in a hoarse, yapping voice, opening his jaws wide, so that his grey-green side-whiskers, with the unpleasantly naked-looking ear-lobes behind them, seemed to grow directly out of his mouth. Etzel admitted that he was young, and gave his age, adding, however, the rather cheeky comment, that hitherto he had been unable to convince himself that mere age had ever sufficed to save the world from stupidity and meanness. Maurizius threw him an irritated glance; then he chuckled to himself, and the chuckle ended in a long attack of coughing, which ceased only after much expectoration. Etzel felt nauseated, but he concealed his disgust, and said, in an amiable attempt to begin a casual conversation, that he hoped that Herr Maurizius would forgive him his youth. The desire had come to him, he did not quite know how, to hear the truth, or at least the facts, of the Maurizius affair, even though he could not promise that he would be in a position either now or later to be of any use or assistance. Who indeed would believe such a promise? Perhaps, however, it would not in the end be a waste of time; in any case, after much hesitation, he had come with the hope that he was not paying an idle visit. He brought forth his appeal with a mixture of embarrassment and naïve and persuasive warmth which it is not easy to describe. If his grandmother, the *Generalin*, had seen him sitting there, with his legs crossed and his hands folded over his knees, she would probably have burst into sarcastic laughter, and would have called him, as she sometimes did, an enlightened midget.

The old man sank into profound silence. His pipe went out.

6

His life had been a simple one, which had indeed become gloomier and gloomier with the advance of age, and in which the effort to prove the innocence of his son had risen to be a

ruling passion. His marriage with the daughter of a clergyman from the Upper Rhine had given him four children—three sons and a daughter. He had a property near Gelnhausen, whose chief revenue was from wine-grapes. He had lived with his family a carefree life. In the summer of 1900 an epidemic of typhus broke out, which in the course of a fortnight had carried off his wife, his daughter, and his two elder sons. The youngest boy, Leonhart, was at this time twenty years of age, and was studying at the University of Bonn. He had always been the favourite of his father, who regarded this Benjamin of the family as unusually gifted, and was partial to the point of weakness to his talents and his girlish delicacy. After the catastrophe of his fourfold loss, what had been preference and partiality had become idolatry. He was at once the boy's father and his mother. If he did not receive news of him daily he became uneasy. He met all the boy's demands for money, which were not precisely modest, although the revenue of his property was diminishing year by year, and the construction of a rather large wine-press had proved an unfortunate speculation, so that he had had to raise heavy mortgages in order to meet his obligations. To all these matters Leonhart paid no attention. Assured of a brilliant career, spoiled by his fellow-students and professors, welcomed in the best society, the bearing of a victorious favourite of fortune had become disarmingly natural to him. His father did not dare to rob him of the illusion that as the only son of a man of property he had unlimited means at his disposal; on the contrary, he trembled at the idea that one day his son would come to recognize the real situation. Each academic distinction of Leonhart's, each examination passed, each aristocratic acquaintance made by the conceited young man, and faithfully reported to his father, gave old Maurizius as much satisfaction as though he had begotten an amazing genius. The dreams which he cherished for the boy were exalted indeed; far beyond Leonhart's own ambitions, which probably went no farther than a desire to live well and pleasantly, to devote himself without effort to the pursuits of a man of taste, and to cut an imposing figure in the

world, on whose good opinion and approval he set the greatest value. Shortly after Leonhart had begun to teach at the university the enlightenment occurred which his father had so much dreaded. There was a matter of a gambling debt of three thousand five hundred marks which had to be paid within twenty-four hours. The old man had not the money. He was able to procure it only with the greatest difficulty. A money-lender advanced it at a usurious rate of interest. Leonhart was dismayed. The father and son had a long conversation; they sat all night, over a bottle of *Liebfrauenmilch*, in the rose-covered arbour at the back of the house. The end of it was that Maurizius actually apologized to his son for being unable to place at his disposal the wealth which the boy most reasonably demanded of him; for that a boy barely twenty-two years of age should be teaching at a university, and recognized as an authority on his subject, seemed to him an unparalleled achievement. Two months later Leonhart's engagement was announced to the widow of a well-to-do paper-maker, whom he had met while staying in Kreuznach, and six weeks later they were married. He informed his father of both events, of the engagement as well as the wedding, in a few threadbare phrases. Maurizius's dismay was so great that when the newly-married pair, towards the end of their wedding trip, came to visit him for a few days, he still seemed almost inarticulate, and did not even take proper leave of his son when they left. Leonhart, not without a certain eagerness, seized this opportunity of feeling himself affronted, and withdrew himself from his father, to all appearances oblivious of the old man's disappointment and resentment. The fact was that he had become weary of his father's devoted tyranny; moreover, he was ashamed of him, of his unpolished manners, his simplicity, and his lack of culture. As a middle-class snob he was glad to draw a discreet veil over his antecedents. As a matter of fact he no longer needed the old man, for his wife had brought him a dowry of eighty thousand marks, the fortune which she had inherited from her dead husband, for they had had no children.

Elli Hensolt, now Frau Maurizius, was a Jahn by birth. The Jahns, at the close of the century, were still a family respected in the Rhineland; her father, a notary, had been mayor of Remagen during the last years of his life, and was regarded as a leader of the Central Party, which he had served with distinction during the *Kulturkampf*. He did not, however, succeed in making a fortune. The boom had not carried him up with it; he was perhaps too respectable, or hardly clever enough, to fill his own pockets out of the surplus of wealth; and after his death his family, though not precisely poor, were restricted to a modest income, and gradually fell back into obscurity. Besides Elli there were two other children; a son who fell as a subaltern in one of the African colonies, and a second daughter, Anna, who was eighteen at the time of Elli's marriage.

Many things contributed to Peter Paul Maurizius's dislike of this marriage, and his hatred of his son's wife. The first was that the Jahns were Catholics. Although he himself was by no means a pious Protestant—he was not even a regular church-goer—Maurizius clung to the established conventions of his family with that puritanism which is compounded of the pride of the peasant, obedience to family tradition, and the consciousness of belonging to a progressive community. Yet he might have become reconciled to this betrayal, since he had never done anything to prevent it. What was even worse was the fact that the woman was neither attractive, pretty, nor smart; she had, indeed, no very obvious advantages; she was distinguished neither by birth, nor by good connections, nor by wealth. Eighty thousand marks was a pitiful sum to set against Leonhart's merits, Leonhart's future, Leonhart's possibilities! Worst of all, moreover, she was fully fifteen years older than her husband. A woman of thirty-eight and a man of twenty-three, and this man Leonhart! There was no getting over that; Leonhart had thrown himself away; he had been snared by an intriguing woman; he had been bribed to salvage a leaking vessel, and soon his magnificent youth would lie in ruins behind him. This was how Maurizius regarded the marriage, and since he firmly believed that Elli had robbed him

of his son, stolen the boy's love, and hardened his heart against his father, condemning the latter to a frightful loneliness, it was not long before the old man's mind was wholly obsessed by a longing for revenge. If he still cared to go on living it was only in anticipation of the repentance and return of the beloved prodigal. He counted on this; in his black grief he hoped and eagerly waited for some tremendous and avenging stroke of fate. It came, but otherwise than he had anticipated; for it destroyed him also.

7

For the first two years the married life of the pair had been unclouded. Leonhart's friends had always acquitted him of calculation in respect of his marriage; they had angrily repudiated all accusations of interested action, recognizing no other motives than friendship, inclination, affection and gratitude. His wife, they always said, had saved the volatile and readily-influenced young man from the dangers which were latent in his character. They maintained that she now had him well in hand, and that it was thanks to her that he was less irascible and vacillating, and had less of a mania for society. Love: who could penetrate a relation so peculiar, and distinguish what was "real love" from mutual respect, mutual understanding, and the exercise of those qualities essential to a harmonious life? What, indeed, was "real love"? An ideal of the novel-reader's: time had stripped the conception of its iridescent cloak of falsehood. The wife, at all events, was devoted to her husband, was capable of making sacrifices for him, had faith in him, was unceasing in her attentions to him; perhaps this was "real love", and the fact that his own love was possibly not quite so "real" was not very important; there was no need to puzzle one's brains over the matter. One thing was certain: it was at this period that Leonhart Maurizius published several of his most valued works, and there was some talk of his being appointed by the Government to undertake research work in Spain.

But after a time public opinion changed in regard to the

Maurizius marriage, and there were rumours of discord. It was said that Elli had learned of Leonhart's relations with a certain dancer. These relations, it was true, had ceased a year before the marriage, but they had resulted in a child, a little girl; and the mother having meanwhile become destitute, Leonhart was reminded, through a lawyer, of his legal obligation towards his daughter. He had kept the matter from his wife; she knew nothing at all of the affair; but, on the other hand, he confided his troubles to his sister-in-law. Anna Jahn undertook to care for the now two-year-old child; with Leonhart's approval she took it to England, to a friend and distant connection, the superintendent of a home for governesses. By her Hildegard Körner—for this was the name in which the child had been christened—was brought up, and with her she remained. Curiously enough, Leonhart cherished for the motherless child (the dancer having meanwhile died of tuberculosis in Arosa) a sort of poetical infatuation, although he really knew nothing of her. This feeling grew and persisted, and Anna Jahn both understood and encouraged it, whereas Elli, after she had been informed of the matter, first by an anonymous letter, and then by the hesitating confession of her husband, fought jealously against it, and could not even bear to hear the child mentioned. From this time onward Anna Jahn seemed to be inextricably bound up with Leonhart's life. After the death of her mother she had left Cologne, where they had lived, had spent a few months in various other cities, and had then come to Bonn, where she was soon a daily visitor in her sister's house. Opinions differed as to whether her disastrous influence over Leonhart, and on his marriage, began at once or became evident only after a time. One did not need to be a prophet to foretell a bad ending to such a situation! There are conjunctures of fate which are almost platitudes; though here a personality was at work, at first in the background, who lifted the situation above the level of bourgeois commonplace. The astonishing beauty of his young sister-in-law could not leave a man like Leonhart untouched. Anna Jahn was at that time at the height of her blossoming; to see her was to fall under her

spell. Students serenaded her and sent her poems; the officers of the garrison sought introductions to the families with whom she associated; when she appeared on the street people stood still and stared. For a time she was the topic of the day, like a great singer or actress; young girls would say, "I have seen Fräulein Jahn" as though they were relating some thrilling adventure. Elli should have hesitated before opening her home to her sister; but it was she herself who had advised Anna to settle in the city; she did not want to feel that a sister so much younger was unprotected and alone in the world. She was the artisan of her own unhappiness.

Leonhart seemed at first to avoid Anna. He said she was unsympathetic to him, that she irritated him. And Anna treated him at times with a sarcasm which was so delicate that he did not dare to regard it as sarcasm, and so offensive that he would have died of shame had he admitted that he understood it. Towards other people she expressed herself more openly: as, for instance, when she spoke of him, smiling with compassion, as being like a little schoolboy living under the supervision of a strict elderly lady. All too soon the division between the husband and wife became apparent. Nature herself had created it and was increasing it. Strangers would sometimes ask whether the lady whom they had seen with Maurizius was his mother. "No," was the smiling reply; "his wife." "Oh!"—and there would follow a moment of startled silence. The malicious epithet of "schoolboy" was not entirely unjustified. Elli controlled her husband's every step. She supervised his appointments, his work, his time-table, his reading, his letters, his lectures and his expenditure. She was not stingy; she even made him handsome presents, but she never allowed him to dispose of any large sum of money. She was too intelligent not to realize the mistake that she was making, but the instinct to keep him in leading-strings as long as possible, and at any price, was predominant. When he went out he was obliged to tell her at exactly what time he would return. Once the appointed moment had come she did not take her eyes from the clock, and if he were

late she began to tremble as though in a fever. And while she waited she felt that she was ageing. She would sit before a mirror and watch herself growing older. She sought confirmation of her fear in the eyes of those about her, and anxiously denied it when she did receive it. Meanwhile people's tongues were busy with Anna Jahn and Leonhart. They had been seen together in a museum, on an excursion, or at the house of a friend. There were whispers. Elli realized what had befallen her. So long as a spark of self-control was left to her she pretended that she knew nothing. She realized that her husband was drifting farther from her day by day, and she clung to him with the strength of despair. And all this was only the beginning of things.

8

Meanwhile old Maurizius sat like a spider in its web, patiently waiting. For a time he paid a detective to bring him news of his son, and of what was going on in his home. It was thus that he had learned the story of the little Hildegard; he followed her traces, and made every conceivable effort to obtain possession of the child. This, he thought, with his peasant cunning, would put a trump-card in his hand. But he did not succeed. . . . He was told of Anna Jahn. He had the young girl watched. He heard of dissensions between Leonhart and his wife, of the rift between them, of increasing domestic quarrels, and of the scandal that was gathering over them like a cloud. He was content. It was all grist to his mill. But when one October night Leonhart appeared at his house unexpectedly—he had come, as he said, in a friend's car, in order to say good-bye before a long journey—the old man was alarmed by the desperation which he perceived in the face and bearing of his son. He at once had the impression that this farewell visit, paid at this impossible hour of the night, was only a pretext. Why this nice consideration after three and a half years of brutal forgetfulness? There could not be a word of truth in what the fellow said. Leonhart was talking mere inconsequential nonsense; but finally he came to the point: he needed money. He did not dare to demand it; he only hinted

at heavy obligations. But when he saw the old man's stony face he gave up all further attempts, all further dissimulation; he thought only of getting away again as quickly as possible. His father did not detain him. Leonhart might have gone down on his knees before him, but he would not have given him a single mark until he had heard him utter the words: I am rid of that woman. And he was acting a remarkable comedy of dissimulation when he coldly accompanied his son to the door, without shaking hands. This was the same man who, after his son's condemnation, and while he was serving his sentence, contrived to accumulate a fortune: for that son. He had hardly any hope of ever again seeing his idolatrously loved boy at liberty during his life-time, of knowing that the man condemned to a lifelong sentence was enjoying the interest of the capital accumulated with such determination; nevertheless, he arranged his life and made his dispositions as though he could count on it with certainty. He had succeeded in selling his property at a favourable moment; after paying off the mortgages he had thirty-five thousand marks left. With incomprehensible and prophetic foresight he had deposited this sum in a Swiss bank (it is said of monomaniacs that they accomplish their unique purpose with absolute lucidity), and he lived on a fraction of the interest. He lived like the inmate of an almshouse; his flat was a pigsty, his suit was the same from year to year, his meals consisted of sausage, bread, and cheese; and in eighteen years the thirty-five thousand marks had become sixty thousand francs. He was seventy-four years of age, but the thought that he might die before Leonhart left prison had never entered his head; death had for him no terrors, for it had no reality.

9

It was only later that Etzel was able to piece together the picture of this past, from the many details which he learned one by one. In the days that followed he had several conversations with Peter Paul Maurizius; they met at an appointed place, not far from the Baron's house. In his senile imbecility, and because

all his plans and attempts hitherto had pitifully miscarried, the old man regarded the boy as something in the nature of a divine messenger, and gave no heed to the ridiculous difference of their ages. To Etzel he spoke more freely than he had spoken to anyone for twenty years. At the same time, he was still cautious. But the boy had him bewitched, as the saying goes, and he thought it not impossible that Etzel might help him in his great cause; and while he imagined that he was slyly leading him on, the boy, who was at least as crafty as himself, was getting out of him all that he wanted to know, and the old man even placed at his disposal a good part of his carefully collected material. And while Etzel, in this way, obtained a fairly accurate knowledge of the incidents of the affair, as well as the relations between the persons concerned, and was able, with his fresh, untainted vision, to survey the confused interplay of interests, he was equally well aware of the demoniacal darkness of the world in the background, which seemed to him more inscrutable than the doings of the human actors. It was a vile world; utterly divorced from all that had hitherto meant "the world" for him; this was why it was so inscrutable. This was one of the reasons why he refrained from any premature conclusions, and bore himself like a diligent student attending a course of lectures on criminal jurisdiction.

When the old man emerged from the somnolent torpor into which he fell day after day, and sometimes night after night, as a drunkard seeks intoxication, in order to decipher the past, and to devise some comprehensible formula, his first action was to knock out his pipe and fill it afresh. His bony, yellow hand trembled as he did so; meanwhile he began to talk.

Men who have spent a great part of their lives in thinking about one particular subject, eliminating all other events, and considering all those with whom they have any dealings in relation to this subject, presuppose in their listeners their own complete comprehension, and will even lose their temper when they realize their mistake. Etzel, moreover, at first did not understand the old man's senile chatter, and from time to time fear-

lessly interrupted him with a friendly: "What did you say, please? What was that?" The old man would make a helpless gesture with his right hand, rise to his feet, shuffle over to the shelves of newspapers, pull out a pile of them, and throw the yellow pages on the table. Then he would walk up and down with his hands in his trousers pockets. The darkness fell; there was no electric light in the wretched building; on the chest of drawers there was a tiny oil-lamp; this Maurizius lighted; it flickered and went out: he trimmed the wick and lighted it again, using his stiff left arm only when he was obliged, and grumbling at the lamp-chimney, which was cracked; and all the while Etzel watched him, and listened with rapt attention. His words became plainer; his coughing and spitting ceased. When the lamp was at last burning, giving no more light than a stable lantern, he pointed to the papers, on which the dust that he had raised was slowly beginning to settle again, telling Etzel that one could read everything in them, how the affair had begun, and how it had continued, from the revolver-shot to the arrest, from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-ninth of October of the unforgettable year.

"You can find it all there, young man. If you like you can also believe what you see printed. The whole world believed it at the time; the commission of inquest, the examining magistrate, the reporters, and the newspaper-readers. One person repeated what another had said, or wrote what another had written. No one asked himself: how could he have shot at her while he was still at the garden gate? That had been established by the witnesses. I beg you to remember, young gentleman: by the garden gate, a distance of eighteen yards. At a quarter to seven on the twenth-fourth of October, when it was perfectly dark. I beg you to remember. Can one shoot a person through the heart with a pistol at a distance of eighteen yards, in pitch darkness? An honest answer, young gentleman! No. She was running towards the house when she was struck. Waremmé testified to that under oath. A shot from behind. From behind, into the heart. Moreover, there's the evidence of the maid, Frieda Weiss, that first

of all his wife went to meet him from the front door. As was quite natural. For consider: he had just come home from a journey. He was carrying a leather suitcase in his left hand. The husband was returning from a journey, mark you; his wife was expecting him. What would a wife do? She would go to meet him. Or wouldn't she? Don't you think his wife would go to meet him? Or wouldn't she? Well, then. Nevertheless, a shot in the back. Monstrously improbable, don't you think? The records of the case? They got round it. It was explained. It was explained against him. Everything was explained against him. He had the pistol in his right hand, it was said. And who saw that? Waremmé. He saw it and swore to it. Waremmé even swore that he saw him lift and point the revolver. And I ask you, where was Waremmé standing, young gentleman? According to his statement, under the acacia, precisely three yards from Elli. What did Kleinmichel say, the telegraph boy, who came into the garden directly after the shot was fired? He said Leonhart was standing at the corner of the house. In front of him, not behind him. In front of him; I beg you to note that he was standing in front of him, so he must have been walking ahead of him. But the court was of opinion that Kleinmichel must have been mistaken; otherwise the whole story wouldn't fit together, the net wouldn't close. And otherwise Waremmé was guilty of perjury. And what was Waremmé doing in the garden? At six thirty-five he was said to have been still in the club. Various witnesses, persons whose word was incontestable, all agreed on that. From the club to the garden gate is twelve hundred and forty-three yards, exactly, to an inch. You will have to admit, young gentleman, that one must do some smart walking to cover twelve hundred and thirty-four yards in ten minutes. And how did Herr Waremmé explain that? He explained it thus: that Anna Jahn had telephoned him to come at once, she felt so uncomfortable; there were suspicious persons wandering about the house. Suspicious persons, a quarter of an hour before a murder. Magnificent, isn't it? That's what I call seeing ghosts! Thereupon Herr Waremmé runs as

though the devil were after him, because he can't find a cab in the whole town; he he! Of course, no one saw him running in the crowded thoroughfare, on a fine night with the street-lamps burning all in a row. The little bit of fog there was would not have prevented anyone from seeing a great fellow like that leaping along like a goat. Have you ever seen such a collection of contradictions brought together? Well, and the examining magistrate! He was not troubled by any misgivings; God forbid! He went straight towards the goal. For the goal—he already knew what that was; it was for him to build the road to it. It all went as smooth as silk. Motives as numerous as the sands of the sea. Evidence enough to feed the pigs. It all hangs together magnificently; there is not the tiniest hole in the net. It is an unimportant circumstance that the alleged murderer denies the crime. That needn't disturb them; no, they know their business. But perhaps . . . I think . . . I venture to submit . . . one doesn't stand there like that, with such angelic calm, from the first minute to the last; no, worthy public and worshipful court, one doesn't repeat two thousand times with such angelic constancy: 'I did not do it!' To the judge, the lawyer, one's father, one's friends, the jury, and finally from prison, again and again: 'I did not do it!' He shouldn't have run away: I admit that. Colossally stupid. To run away like a schoolboy. To hide in a girl's room in Frankfurt for a couple of days; to go to Cassel, to Hamburg; to shave his moustache; but it was before this, of course, that he shaved his moustache; while he was living in hotels under a false name. The boy lost his head; he could no longer tell black from white. When they arrested him there and he was told: on suspicion of murder, he stood as though struck by lightning. Then he asked: 'What, you mean me?' Note that, young gentleman! 'Me!' Like a person waked from sleep! He knows nothing about the warrant for his arrest, or what all the newspapers are full of. They put that down to his cunning, to his playing a part. If a man has a clear conscience he gives himself up, and doesn't go wandering about the world for a week: isn't that so? Paragraph

F., as clear as ink! Almighty gods! They can hear the very grass grow!"

He stopped, gasping. A terrible fit of coughing prevented him from speaking further. Etzel stood up and turned down the smoking lamp; when the desperate fit of coughing was over he said, as though addressing his fingers: "Why, there must have been two revolvers. . . ."

Maurizius stared at him with open mouth. "Why two?" he stammered. Surprised by his astonishment, Etzel explained: "The woman was shot in the back. She was walking towards him; he was walking towards her, it is said. He had a revolver in his hand. Who then had the other revolver?"

The old man closed his mouth slowly, like a nut-cracker, and began to swallow his lips. After a time he muttered, with a dismal grin, "Perfectly correct. But there was never any talk of that. That was never assumed officially. The assumption was that she ran first towards him, then away from him. A theory, isn't it? You know what a theory is. When a man has hold of a theory ten horses can't drag it away from him. What does he care about the reality? The theory ran: When she saw him with the revolver in his hand she was terrified, and turned and ran towards the house. Quite plausible. Two revolvers? No. The story is that not even one was found. Waremmé insists that after the shot was fired he snatched the weapon from his hand and threw it away. Tossed in into the shrubbery. Three detectives searched the garden and the surroundings for two days and couldn't find it. Nothing. The revolver had disappeared. It never reappeared. What do you say to that? Inexplicable, isn't it? It's fine, how inexplicable all that is!" He giggled foolishly.

Etzel stared into nothingness, thinking. Suddenly he lifted his head and asked: "Who then could . . . who then do you think. . . ."

"Pst!" The old man interrupted him with a sharp hiss. He went close up to the boy, squinting hideously, and said, with the surly severity of a village schoolmaster: "Not so inquisitive! Not a word! Where the devil should we find ourselves? He him-

self, understand, my Leonhart himself, never answered that question. Never. Not a word. Not a syllable. He refused. You understand, young man. What's the use of us two asking? How could it even help us to know? Waremmé's oath stands against it. Waremmé's oath covers the whole matter. It's an impregnable fortress, an oath like that. Think a moment: there was Anna Jahn, the beautiful, noble, unhappy Anna Jahn. Well, what are you staring so queerly for?" (As a matter of fact, Etzel had looked up in amazement when the old man screeched out the three adjectives in a tone of such furious contempt.) "That's what one read everywhere at the time: the beautiful, noble, unhappy Anna Jahn. Immediately after that evening she was seriously ill. For six weeks she lay close to death. So it was said. She had to be spared. No excitement, for Heaven's sake, no excitement! After six weeks she was sent south. In Nice, or the devil knows where, she gave her evidence on deposition. She did not reappear until the trial. The whole court was overcome with sympathy. It was a pleasure to see how considerate the president of the court was at her examination. Put her answers, nicely and palatably, right into her mouth. And the attorney-general, Andergast, was all sugar and honey. For she too had almost fallen a victim to the monster. The pure virgin, the victim of the good-for-nothing seducer! Everyone had suddenly forgotten all the gossip. It is a wonder the professors and clerks and officers and students did not get up a torch-light procession in her honour. All at once she was as spotless as a dove, and he—my God, for him no word was bad enough! Only the people. The people thought differently. After the verdict things looked nasty for the Jahn woman for a few hours. Well, that's beside the point. But what was I going to say . . . what did I want to say? Ah, yes: Waremmé, but for his evidence . . . you understand . . . the matter would have ended differently. The man ruined us. That man, I tell you, lives under a curse. Or there is no God in heaven." (There again of a sudden was that Biblical pathos; Etzel drooped his head). "That man. . . . I hope his last hour has not yet struck. I hope it for our welfare and for his, for one can't envy his

dying moments. Of the other person I don't want to speak. It seems to me that she already has her reward here below. There are all sorts of rumours. But the man . . . there is still judgment on earth for him. Yes, yes, yes!"

Etzel looked at the clock. "I must go home," he said in alarm. The old man nodded. Etzel asked him whether he might take some of the papers with him; he wanted to read them. The old man nodded again. He helped the boy to choose them. When Etzel was already in the hall he ran after him and gave him a few additional pamphlets, imploring him to take good care of them and not to lose any of them. "I'll be careful," Etzel promised, and set off at a gentle trot in order to catch the train.

CHAPTER IV

I

ETZEL spent that evening, and the afternoon and evening of the following Sunday, reading the old newspaper reports. He said to himself: I must examine them, and remain as cool as a reasonably inquisitive spectator. Since he was dealing with journalism he was doubly on his guard. It all sounded like a novel. He did not in general care for novels. An eager pupil of Melchior Ghisels, he drew a sharp distinction between imaginative fiction and facts which had been purposely modified to serve a purpose. In this respect he was dispassionate to the point of insensibility. The romantically embellished records were therefore an abomination to him. Viewed across a gulf of eighteen years, there was something grisly about them; they were like a bedizened, dancing corpse. And yet there were individual features of the case which had remained untouched by the years; theirs was the truth of nature, which no revision can impair.

During the following days—for he still had a whole week of his vacation before him—he developed a secret activity which had its roots in his endeavour to obtain fresh data, fresh points of view, and to confirm the story told him by old Maurizius, whose subjective bias was unmistakable; and to verify these newspaper reports also, inasmuch as he suspected them of exaggeration or distortion in one direction or the other. But where was he to look for such verification? And if he found it, how would he be justified in regarding it as any more reliable than what he had already read and heard? He did not trust people's memories. He knew by instinct that every truth is forgotten in order to make way for a pleasing illusion. It was this that gave him his profound aversion for history. He always smiled when he heard old people narrating incidents of their own past. It was so amusing, so easy to see how they imagined things, and how much more pleasure they got from the half-lie than from the whole truth which, it seemed, they no longer wished to admit. The only person who might have helped him in these investigations, who

might have helped him to overcome his initial doubts, was his father. But the mere idea of asking him, of all people, was absurd. Never would Trismegistos acknowledge the justification of a single question; the violet-blue eyes would be frozen with surprise at such amazing audacity. So there was nothing for it but to collect his data in silence, and to sift and compare the matter thus collected. Rie had an acquaintance who came to see her once or twice a week: one Distelmayer, a Chancery official, who had served for years in the law courts, and had been pensioned since the war: things were going badly with him, for like all retired civil servants who were living on their pensions, he had hardly enough to keep himself alive. Rie always provided some lunch for him when he announced that he was coming, and the same comedy was always played: he would refuse the invitation in the most decisive terms, declaring that he had just had a hearty meal. Then, apparently tired of resisting her persuasion, he would surrender, and devour the soup, meat, vegetables and dessert to the last mouthful, with a satisfaction pitiful to see. Sometimes it happened that Herr von Andergast was passing through the hall just as Distelmayer was arriving or leaving the house. Then the councillor would bow with a servility which was painful to Etzel, and Herr von Andergast would be affable, would pat the councillor on the shoulder with two fingers, and ask, as one colleague of another: "Well, how are things going, my dear Distelmayer?" Although Etzel had not much hope of getting anything useful out of the rather garrulous little man, he nevertheless made the attempt; he spun a web of candour round himself, the effect of which he had tested on grown-up persons. He put himself on the councillor's level, and this was another sort of condescension than that displayed by Herr von Andergast; for after all, a young man with some intellectual pride must condescend a little when he has to deal with a person so worn and crushed as the councillor. Etzel began the conversation in a jesting tone, in order to give the old man confidence; he allowed the councillor to tease him a little, to utter a few of those rather inept sarcasms in which elderly people are fond of indulging when

talking to boys; then he easily turned the conversation to serious matters, casually let fall the name of Maurizius, and saw that the councillor had at once become attentive. Someone, Etzel informed him, had been telling him quite a lot about the case, and he was interested; he and a friend of his had been discussing the affair. The friend in question was a distant relative of the Jank family—or no—what was her name? it had escaped him; perhaps the councillor would remember the surname of the wife's family, of the sister of Maurizius's wife?—He had by no means forgotten the name; it was only that he wanted to “draw” the councillor, and Distelmayer at once mentioned the name, and showed that he knew far more about the case than Etzel had anticipated; that he had once been seriously interested in it. Etzel wanted simply to hear about Anna Jahn, and her life after the trial, for he had something definite in mind. As a matter of fact, Distelmayer was able to gratify his curiosity; it was a weakness of his to acquaint himself with the private lives of persons who had been the object of public interest and had been involved in a *cause célèbre*. This inclination is often to be found in those who have been connected with the law; it is compounded of the love of prying and the fascination of an unsolved riddle. Distelmayer had even interested himself in the Maurizius case in the capacity of author; he was half puzzled and half flattered by the intense interest of the young Baron (he always addressed the boy as “Herr Baron”, which seemed silly to Etzel, who did not, however, dare to protest, for fear of offending the old man). No less flattered was Rie, who sat quietly listening to the whole conversation; delighting in the alert intelligence, the knowledge of the world, and the conversational brilliance which her Etzel was displaying. At such times she claimed him with particular pride as her own, her property, the fruit of her care, and she would exchange secret glances with the councillor, challenging his admiration. Etzel observed this, and was conscious of the absurdity of the situation; but what did that matter, so long as his efforts were crowned with success? He realized once again that one could not get anything out of

people by direct methods, not even from the most inoffensive people; one always had to outwit them, to deceive them as to what one wanted; it was like a constant setting of traps.

As to Anna Jahn: she had long ago changed her name. In 1913 she had married the director of a large brick-works, a well-to-do man. Before that she had been abroad a long while. Nothing had been heard of her; she had not written to any of her former friends, and in the course of time she had been completely forgotten. The death of her sister Elli had made Anna the sole heiress of Elli's whole fortune, but Heaven knows what she did with it; for when she returned from abroad she had nothing left. The councillor had learned this from an assessor whose aunt had formerly been intimate with Anna Jahn. (Over the whole of the inhabited earth there is a net of such relations, so that no one can really stand outside of it; and it is only the inconceivable intricacy of the threads that run from each to all that gives the law of these relations the appearance of chance.) To this aunt Anna Jahn had come one winter evening, more than twelve years ago, broken in body and soul, inexpressibly weary, carrying a little trunk, like a maid out of a job; lonely, silent, poverty-stricken. Whence she came she did not say; what she had gone through she confided to no one; she was overcome by a panic timidity on meeting people whom she had formerly known. It was soon realized that her mental condition was critical. It happened once that someone, a guest of her friend's, spoke casually, without recalling her presence, of Leonhart Maurizius, and of the still (as the speaker thought) "unsolved mystery". Anna turned white as a sheet, began to tremble, and collapsed on the floor in convulsions, which continued for hours. After this she fell into a state of morbid depression, and was sent to a sanatorium. There she slowly recovered, and even regained something of her beauty and her bewitching charm. In the sanatorium she met a M. Duvernion, from Lorraine, on whom she made a profound impression, but whose offer of marriage she could not decide to accept until three years later. Apparently she had no reason to regret her decision; one heard very little about her,

for only a very few people realized that she was still living; but the little one did hear was not to her disadvantage, nor did it suggest that she was dogged by misfortune. She was living with her husband in the neighbourhood of Trier; she was said to have two children; she preferred to live a very retired life; she scarcely ever left the house, and had no social relations with anyone outside her immediate family circle. The dangerous attacks of illness to which she had been subject returned more and more infrequently, and gradually it began to seem as though she had completely forgotten her dark and troubled past.

Etzel listened to this account with silent attention. With his usual lucidity he drew the conclusion, from the old councillor's story—and subsequently this conclusion proved to be correct—that there was no opening in that direction; that as far as one could see the door was barred.

2

In the very nature of things, the figure of a public prosecutor is likely to arouse little sympathy, except indeed from the jurist, even when he brings the most execrable criminals to expiation. Perhaps this is because the prosecutor does not know the individual offender, must not know him, must not consider him. For him there exist only the act, the significance of the act, and the necessity of retribution. He ceases himself to be a human being; the voice which calls the guilty to account is no longer the voice of a human being, and does not wish to be regarded as such; lifted above faction into a region devoid of compassion, it is an impersonal voice, the servant and the agent of the commonwealth. This is how he is regarded; this is how he thinks of himself; but only a character of unusual calibre can grow and fulfil itself in such a vocation, while the smaller man, straining and over-reaching himself, falls into a state of despondency, out of tune with his work, and merely betrays his inadequacy. The features of the man who implacably calls for retribution congeal into the grimace of the policeman.

Never had Etzel seen his father so divested of all fatherliness

as on reading these legal records of eighteen years ago. He was constantly obliged to remind himself: I was not even alive at that time; I wasn't, so to speak, in any way involved; nothing depended upon me, nothing had come to my notice; it all occurred, in some strange, hardly credible way, without the Etzel who now undeniably exists, and acts, and reflects, and knows something of the world, and goes about it with his eyes open. This made time seem in some sense illusory, and his father, whose participation in the affair which was daily absorbing Etzel more completely, and was beginning to govern all his thoughts, assumed an intellectual stature and a personal effectiveness that seemed to have no limits, and were positively intimidating. There were times when the boy imagined him a sort of Comte de Saint-Germain, who even during the trial of the seemingly guilty Jean Calas was the undoing of the innocent man. It was the first time that his father's professional activity had been made real and living to him by means of a whole legal process—cross-examinations, pleas, and verdict—described with dramatic power. (Since his last promotion, Herr von Andergast had appeared in court only on exceptional occasions.) The picture was one which Etzel was unable to grasp, to which he could not adjust himself; in the name of Andergast at least he should have found some scattered clues to his own existence, but it seemed as alien to himself as a stone to a living eye; to have no relation whatever to his own person. There was a sinister hostility about it which no suffering could move; no appeal, no outcry, no proof, no argument, no necessity, no human countenance; nothing, nothing. The prisoner came and went; the metallic, inexorable question addressed to him was not: Are you guilty or not guilty?—it was: Do you or do you not confess, do you or do you not give in? The passage of time, eighteen and a half years, had in no way affected this; there was still the same passionate desire to snare the man, the same unshakable assumption of a knowledge of the act; it leapt into the present like a voice from the adjoining room, and Etzel, as though the voice was meant for him, and was calling him, jumped up, rushed to the

door, bolted it, and ran up and down the room, pressing his hands to his ears. He had to pull himself together, and it cost him a mighty effort, before he could sit unconcernedly at table during the "evening conversation", submitting to cross-examination, listening politely, and wearing the expression of a son who is grateful for being instructed, instead of rising and going up to his father, to ask, with all the urgency, the electrical tension that was in him; "Were you convinced of his guilt? Did you really and truly at the time believe that he had done this thing?" His questioning eyes were fairly riveted to that large, stern, reserved face, to that armoured brow. Of course, in vain. There are human relations which would at once be shattered if at the decisive moment the decisive understanding were attained. They endure only because this is not achieved.

Nevertheless, he had occasion to perceive his father's participation in the Maurizius case in a different light, and he was able thereupon to realize the opinion which had crystallized in the minds of some of the upper ranks of the intellectuals. This information came to him through Professor Förster-Löring, the sociologist and economist, a man whom Etzel respected, and of whose merits he had often heard Camill Raff speak with admiration. A remarkably ugly man, misshapen, with a broken nose twisted to one side. His two sons, who were twins, were classmates of Etzel's; he had often been at their house. Herr von Andergast approved of the friendship. It happened at this juncture that they invited him again to their house; the Ellmers and Schlehleim were there also. While tea was being served the professor joined the boys. His presence always had the effect of starting some interesting conversation, and now, discussing this and that, they began to speak of modern jurisdiction, a subject which was just beginning to be a "burning" one; the young people felt that it touched the very life and marrow of the nation. Etzel, full of his one subject, like a loosely hanging bell, which responds to the touch of every breath of wind with a dull, metallic sound, mentioned, as though casually, the name Maurizius; as though he wanted to know whether the professor were familiar

with the case, and whether he felt inclined to give his opinion of it. The professor looked up in surprise.

"It's curious that you should mention that case, Andergast," he said. "I alluded to it only recently in an article." (Aha, he too! thought Etzel.) "From the very first it seemed to me symptomatic. Yes, an extraordinary case, in more senses than one. Have you looked into it, or heard anything special about it?" Etzel blinked, fidgeted uneasily on his chair, and made some unmeaning reply, whereupon his companions looked at him curiously.

"Well, it's not surprising that you should mention it," continued the professor, in a friendly tone; "the connection is quite natural, since it was your father who had the case in hand. One might say that he was really its guiding spirit. It needed just his strength, his courage, his superiority, to overcome the difficulties by which he was confronted. I admired him greatly in that struggle. For it was certainly a German *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*; Germany was faced, so to speak, with a moral alternative, it was one of those historical moments in which one may choose between ascent or descent. On the one side there was frivolity, pleasure-seeking, irresponsibility; on the other, conscience, discipline and duty. Once again the better side was victorious. I still remember your father's closing speech. It was a remarkable performance; it should have been posted upon all the walls and hoardings. I know that there were strong subterranean currents in favour of the accused; the movement has not entirely died down yet; just as there are still enthusiasts who regard Caspar Hauser as a martyr. But what does that prove? We older people, who lived at that time and kept our eyes open, have no doubt about the unfortunate man's guilt. For that, of course, is what he was: unfortunate; less a criminal than a weakling; unstable and lazy to the very depths of his soul."

Etzel sat with bowed head. A superior, stubborn little smile played about his lips. He might have spared himself the allusion to Caspar Hauser, he thought; he does not help his cause there; we know better than that (he had been interested himself in the story of the foundling and had read a good deal about it); but

what he said about father was fine; that was splendid! He slowly lifted his eyelids, and looked with his short-sighted eyes at the faces before him, one after another. There were beautiful faces there and ugly faces; and the ugliest, though it was also the most expressive, was that of the professor. While in everyday life, at his games or his lessons, for example, Etzel often found his short-sightedness distressing, at other times, in his intercourse with people, it was a source of pleasure to him, because he saw their features, and even their general bearing, in a sort of transfiguring twilight.

3

The question to be put to old Maurizius was: where is Waremme? They met at a little coffee-house near the Guiolletplatz. It had been raining for hours; they made their way to the Christuskirche, which was not far distant, and took refuge under the porch. This was the second time they had met in this way in the city—by appointment, of course—but at the first meeting Etzel had not been able to ask the question. Old Maurizius had held him breathless by the story he had told him, and afterwards he had forgotten everything else; he had stolen away from the old man, stumbling along so absent-mindedly that he had gone into the wrong house on the Kettenhofweg, and when he realized this, and turned back, he had fallen down the stone steps by the gate, without, however, hurting himself. The story consisted in the account of how Peter Paul Maurizius had spent the five hours before the sentence of death was pronounced with five of his acquaintances, all old men. God knows what it was that had caused him to evoke this episode of his past. He began to speak of it quite of his own accord, as though it were something that had happened the previous week, of which he had not as yet had time to tell Etzel. Absorbed in himself, with his pipe in the corner of his mouth, he told the story in a croaking voice, interrupting himself now and again to spit.

And this was the story: The attorney-general had finished his speech—the second, which was even more damning than the

first—to which the counsel for the defence—a dry, miserable fellow—it was pitiful to listen to him after the brilliant eloquence of the “bloody Andergast”—had made only a brief reply. The presiding judge gave instructions as to the legal points of the case; the jury withdrew; the court-room, which was packed with members of the public, people of all sorts and classes, was in a state of feverish tension. Peter Paul, led out of court by two friends who had accompanied him from home, left the fermenting mass, sweating out the poison of sensationalism. It was certain that the jury would take hours to deliberate and cast their votes. The two friends who accompanied Peter Paul insisted on his going to an hotel to await the decision. One was a revenue officer from Lorch, the other a miller from St. Goarshausen. They asked a young corporal, the nephew of the revenue officer, to bring them the verdict as quickly as possible, without a moment’s delay. The hotel was scarcely five minutes distant from the court-house. Their object was to spare old Maurizius, to help him over the period of waiting. The soldier promised to remain at the court-house, and when the verdict was announced he would not lose a moment. Peter Paul did whatever they pleased. He neither contradicted them nor expressed any wish of his own. By the gate of the court-house (it was then already evening, a cold August evening) two other old men joined the three friends, silently expressing their sympathy; one was an optician—he too came from Goarshausen—the other an insurance inspector from Langenschwalbach. All four followed Peter Paul into a large room in the hotel, in which stood an immense round table. At this table the five men seated themselves. Peter Paul Maurizius was by far the youngest; the revenue officer, who was the next in age, was sixty; the optician, the oldest, was seventy-eight. They ordered beer; a glass was placed in front of each man, but no one touched it. And there the five of them sat for five full hours, in unbroken silence, and waited for the verdict. When the fourth hour was over the miller got up heavily and opened the door into the hall. They all understood him. He did it so that the messenger might find the room more quickly, so that they

might hear him at once when he came upstairs. . . . "The last hour! There has not been such an hour since the world began, young gentleman!" It was a small hotel; the stairs were of wood, and uncarpeted, and led up directly from the entrance. At last, at twelve minutes to midnight, there was a ring downstairs; after a while the door creaked; again, after a time, heavy boots were heard on the stairs; and all those five men, correctly interpreting the slowness of the steps, were aware of the verdict. It was as though death himself were walking up the stairs. Then the young soldier appeared on the threshold, white as a shroud, and the five old men rose to their feet. One deep sigh came simultaneously from all five throats: "Condemned to death."

4

"Where is Waremme?"

Maurizius considered. He pulled his shabby cap farther over his forehead. It seemed as though he could not make up his mind to reply. "Nothing has been heard of him," he grumbled. "After all, you can imagine the ground was a bit too hot under his feet. He was in a hurry to make himself scarce. No one ever spoke of him again; nothing further has ever been heard of him, up to the present day. He left the country. Just like Anna Jahn; she too went away. Where? Well, in 1908 it was said that they had been seen, he and she, in Deauville. Deauville, was that the name? A watering-place? In France, isn't it?" The old man took the pipe out of his mouth, held it in front of him with his stiff arm, and fixed his repellant, cross-eyed gaze upon Etzel.

The boy stared. "What's that? That's something new! A rumour? Only a rumour? Seen him and her? Who saw them? Who said they were seen?"

Maurizius shrugged his shoulders. "He is said to have worn a beard at that time," he added sarcastically. "Yes; one man shaves, the other provides himself with hair; that is the way of the world, young Herr Andergast." He chuckled hoarsely, and spit upon the stone flags. An old gentleman with a slouch hat came up and stood in front of the ill-assorted pair, fumbling with his umbrella

and muttering a complaint of the weather. When he had gone on again, Etzel asked: "What kind of a man was this Waremmé?"

"Was?" Maurizius exploded. "Was? I hope to God in heaven there's no 'was' about him, no, I hope there's no 'was' about him! *Was!* We should be stuck in the mud for certain then! *Was!*" There was a flicker of rage in his bloodshot eyes.

"I mean . . . because it's so long ago," said Etzel, politely excusing himself.

"It's hard to say anything about him," said the old man sulkily, grinding his jaw to and fro, like a horse whose lips are being chafed by the snaffle. "The devil knows how one's to describe him. It's incredible, if one thinks what he was then and what he is to-day. . . ." He paused. He had evidently said more than he wanted to say; blinking and bewildered, he felt in his pocket for matches. Etzel looked up with curiosity. Here he was on the trail of a discovery. His expression urged the old man on, and involuntarily he seized him by the coat-sleeve. Maurizius had finally found his matches, but he pushed them back into his pocket unused. Somewhat helplessly he began to describe the Waremmé of "those days". Etzel at once felt the incompleteness of the picture. This man was doubtless beyond the old fellow's horizon. He knew a number of facts, but he had no conception of their significance. Even in this vulgar account it was possible to catch a glimpse of an interesting psychological situation, but all cohesion was lacking, and the very events became improbable. Two years before the catastrophe—the catastrophe that was the central point of all that had ever happened—Waremmé had turned up, and had at once taken the whole university by storm. What was he? Well, a philosopher or something of the sort. A writer, or scholar, without any official connections. He never accepted an appointment; perhaps he was never offered one; he enjoyed his independence. He sometimes gave free lectures. People came from a distance to hear him. The professors were beside themselves; they spoke of him as a prodigy. When he went into society people crowded about him; they were completely bewitched by his talk. Waremmé said this, Waremmé said that; well then, there was no

more to be said. In particular, some of the Geheimrats, some of the big manufacturers from the Rhineland, were perfectly crazy about him. This might be explained by the fact that in addition to his own science (and what particular branch of science it was that he studied old Maurizius did not know) he was chiefly interested in politics, war with France, and the Catholic Church. The Jesuits, of course, were behind that. Where did he come from? No one ever really knew. He said that he came from Silesia, that he was the son of a landowner, and that his mother was of noble birth. But the paternal estate was probably in the moon. "When I looked into the matter later no one had ever heard of any Waremmé estate. He had no fortune; he admitted that himself; he even boasted of his poverty; but he might be seen in the club, at the gaming-table, almost any day of the week. In spite of the fact that they didn't accept anyone there who hadn't a handle to his name, they took him up. Sometimes he lost considerable sums, but no one asked where he got the money. If he had five hundred marks in his pocket to-day, he would give a party to-morrow which would cost him a thousand, and to which he would invite the whole town. And everybody came. They came, although as time went on there were queer stories about him. There was a nasty story about the raising of a loan. Then there was the suicide of Lili Quästor, to whom he had been engaged; the daughter of the coal people. One fine day the girl killed herself; no one ever knew why. It was simply hushed up; we were great at hushing things up. So long as the Geheimrats and the coal barons protected him he was safe. In the end, however, he was done for; people of that sort have a pretty good scent; even before the great scandal they had all silently drawn in their horns; and even though there was nothing against him at the finish, except that he had been the friend of the murderer Maurizius, that was enough; he was done for; that was enough. . . ."

"Well, where is he now?" inquired Etzel, resolutely keeping to the point. Maurizius made as though he did not understand him; it seemed as if he were hesitating, at this stage of the game,

to show his cards. With a startled glance he looked the boy up and down. Then he whispered: "That's my secret, and if I tell it you now it must remain our secret. Give me your hand on it!" God knows what he promised himself would come of the "secret", but Etzel gave him an encouraging hand. He continued, still hesitating: Nearly two years ago he had learned that Waremme was living in Berlin. Under a changed name. His confidential-inquiry man, a very experienced fellow, who had cost him a lot of money, had succeeded, with great difficulty, in finding him. It had been possible to find him only because they had tracked him, secretly, and with the greatest caution, to Chicago, where he had lived for eleven years, from 1910 to 1921. After a protracted search, and with the help of a detective agency there, they had succeeded in finding several people who knew of his change of name, and who had known him under his former name as well, in New York, Pittsburgh, and Kansas City. But all that, unfortunately, didn't help them very much. Of course, one had to keep one's eye on him; one never knew what might happen; and in case anything should happen it was as well to be able to lay hands on him at once; but after all, what could happen? As matters stood there was very little chance of ever catching him bending. There was no way of getting at him; he was covered on every side; he had nothing to fear; at least, nothing from him, P. P. Maurizius, and certainly nothing from Leonhart. No, there was no hope; unless he got the wrong side of the law somehow, and such a cunning rascal was hardly likely to do that, there was no way of getting at him. To keep an eye on him, yes; that was important, so that one could lay hands on him at any moment; and he had a man doing that, and he again had *his* people on the job; for the rest, it was just a matter of waiting. The old man stared gloomily into the rain. Was Etzel mistaken, or did he really hear a sort of stifled, wooden sobbing, a sound unlike any that he had ever heard before? "And you went to see him?" he asked, with astonished intuition. The question had forced its way to his lips, simply because the old man had been trying to prevent it ever since the beginning

of their conversation. He started in alarm; his face grew pasty, and he remained obstinately silent.

"And what happened then?" Etzel continued, with apparent innocence, looking at Maurizius with friendly eyes. But the latter still refused to answer, until Etzel gently laid his hand on his breast.

"I made a confounded ass of myself," the old man said, harshly. "What was I to do? What did I expect to do? There was no peace for me until I had seen him face to face. Well, I went. He calls himself a private tutor. And that's how he's registered in the directory. Private tutor, George Warschauer, Usedomstrasse, at the corner of Jasmunderstrasse. On the first floor there's an eating-house. 'Frau Bobike, Lunch' is the sign on the door. He takes his meals there. He doesn't need to pay anything, because he gives lessons to Frau Bobike's two sons. He lives on the third floor. His pupils go to him there. Other people go too. He teaches English, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese; he writes obituary notices, articles for newspapers, and advertisements. Well, then, I went there. And there I saw him. Then I stood on my two legs and thought: '*Oh, Christ!*' And when he looked at me I said, 'I think I have made a mistake.' I turned round, and went straight to the station, and took the train home, fourteen hours at a stretch. There was nothing to be said. Nothing whatever. What could one say? How's one to tackle the matter? How is one to begin? And suppose he were to throw one downstairs, what then? You can't intimidate such a man. And if I say one careless word I shall ruin everything at one stroke, and he'll disappear again. I didn't so much as mention my name. There wasn't even the possibility of telling him what had been branded on my soul all these years. I realized that too late. Good God, no!" He began again to fumble for his matches, and Etzel gazed abstractedly before him as though he were observing the weather.

"I must run off. Good night!" he said suddenly, and ran out into the rain, leaving the old man standing still in surprise. When he had turned the corner he checked his pace, thrust

his hands into his trousers pockets, and began to stroll easily along the street. It was growing dark; the shop windows were brilliantly lighted, and at every third window he stopped and gazed at the display, humming to himself like a street urchin. What was the reason of his good humour? It seemed like an uncontrollable lust of adventure, accompanied from time to time by little outbreaks of gaiety. When he entered the hall of the apartment house on the Kettenhofweg he ran into the two daughters of Dr. Malapert, the oculist who lived on the first floor. They were young girls of fourteen and seventeen; he knew them well, and greeted them familiarly, and as they walked upstairs together he began a lively conversation, asking them whether they had been to the Städel Museum yet, to see the exhibition of ancient Greek sculpture; whether they had gone to the motor races, and whether they were going to Professor Coué's lecture; at the same time making them laugh, by standing on one leg like a stork, in order to tie a shoe-lace which had become undone. Rie was upstairs, and opened the door to him. He almost threw himself upon her, saying that he was frightfully hungry, and he danced round her, chattering, his eyes gleaming as though he were rejoicing over some successful exploit. Rie gave him to understand, by her emphatic winks, that his father had already come home, and was at work, pointing to a curtained door and clapping her hand over his mouth. "I'll be quiet, Rie," he whispered; "but walk up and down with me a little, to pass the time." He took her arm and pulled her into the back of the hall. "Why should you want to make the time pass?" asked Rie in astonishment. Etzel replied: "Because it's unendurable how long it takes to grow a month older." "Silly!" said Rie. "With you," said Etzel jestingly, "time is already beginning to run backwards. My time and yours will meet somewhere, I think, and be rude to one another. Neither will be willing to give way; like two stubborn mules on a bridle-path!"

During this conversation they walked up and down, comically keeping in step with one another. "Just listen to me, boy!" said Rie suddenly, and looking cautiously about her: "Because you

are so nice to-day I'll tell you something." She was now only whispering. "I believe that your mother is no longer where she was; a letter has come from her, from Paris. She seems to be in better health; I have a feeling that she may be coming to this neighbourhood soon. But what they have been writing to one another about lately"—she pointed over her shoulder, with her thumb, rather fearfully, toward Herr von Andergast's study—"that I don't know. For Heaven's sake, don't give me away!" Etzel stood still, freed himself from Frau Rie's arm, looked at her earnestly, and gave a long shrill whistle. "Oh!" he said. Nothing further; and he lapsed into thought. All that can't alter anything, he thought, pressing both his fists against his chest. And now—whether because of Etzel's whistle, or the sound of conversation, or because he had finished his work, Herr von Andergast appeared on the threshold of his room, gazing, with cold surprise in his violet-blue eyes, across the hall, at the two figures who stood there confronting one another. Rie hurried off quickly to the kitchen. She regretted her burst of confidence. She had only wanted to see what the boy would say. The expression of his face, and his silence, made her uneasy. She was filled with jealousy of the unknown woman who had "forgotten her duty", and who could call herself a mother without really being a mother in anything but the name. She had wanted to feed her jealousy, and she was now dissatisfied because she had been successful.

"Good evening, father," said Etzel shyly. Herr von Andergast allowed a few seconds to pass in conversation before he answered, slowly, in his deep voice: "Good evening. You seem remarkably cheerful, my son."

This was no longer true.

In his room Etzel tore a page out of a notebook, and wrote on it: Bobike, Usedom, Jasmunderstrasse; which address he secreted in the lid of his watch.

5

Etzel was already clear in his mind as to the practical feasibility of his plan when he tried to discuss its moral justification—its

theoretical side, so to speak—with Dr. Raff. Camill Raff was waiting for Etzel to approach him. When the boy rang him up on the telephone, to ask whether he might call about eleven o'clock, Dr. Raff had a feeling that it would be advisable to postpone the meeting to a later hour, in order to appear less eager. Moreover, he did not invite the boy to his house, which would not in any case have been very convenient, since his young wife was ill in bed, but arranged to meet him in the Miquelstrasse, at a point near the Palm Garden. Only when he saw Etzel hurrying toward him, at precisely half-past three, did he realize how fond he was of the boy. What a questioning force there was in those sparkling eyes! "When someone questions like that," he thought, "I should be an idiot to imagine that I could answer him, and he is an amiable hypocrite if he behaves as though the answer were of any use to him."

Camill Raff had an extensive knowledge of the young persons with whose guidance he was entrusted. Unfortunately, this was a kind of guidance which could not satisfy him; it was only a partial sort of business; he was fettered by so many subterfuges and regulations, imposed by those in control, and there was so much distrust, there were so many reservations on the part of the boys, that the time was perhaps not far distant when his mental machinery too would begin to get rusty. Up to the present, however, he had not been swamped in sterile pedagogic dogmas; he had as yet no sacerdotal sense of infallibility. He had imagination, and whoever has this gift is constantly receiving as he gives, and striving as he teaches. Consequently he had no reason—as had so many of his older colleagues, who were straining to keep up with the times, while they were actually panting behind them—to fear that he might be regarded with suspicion as a spy; people believed in his comradeship, because he had the courage to keep entirely aloof from all that was equivocal or mendacious. He lacked only one thing: good health. He had sensitive nerves, and was not equal to any great exertion; during the sunless winter months he moved about like a shadow, depressed and unable to work.

Etzel Andergast had long been one of the few favourites with whom he associated personally. Some natures have a brilliancy like that of clean burnished steel which has just been wrought on the divine anvil. They attract one by their freshness, and by a sort of sublime purposefulness, as though they were destined for some quite special achievement. It was only recently that Camill Raff had become aware of something new in Etzel. About a month ago he had had occasion to discuss a painful incident with the boy. Karl Zehntner, the son of a bankrupt salesman, had, during the gymnastic lesson, taken a five-mark note out of Etzel's jacket, which was hanging up among a number of other articles of clothing. The theft was promptly detected, for fat Klaus Mohl had been watching the thief, and the money was found in his pocket. The matter was reported, and Zehntner was expelled from the school. Etzel was for some days obsessed by doubts. He had rather liked Zehntner; he did not regard him as bad—not as worse than the general run of us—as he rather scathingly remarked to Robert Thielemann: and moreover, his parents, as they subsequently learned, were in desperate straits. He began to think that he ought not to have made a fuss about the matter, that they could have settled it between themselves, that with the help of his school-fellows a sharp enough penalty might have been inflicted without destroying the boy's future. He asked Camill Raff frankly whether he had behaved properly. Raff replied that he did not see how he could have behaved differently; the tribunal of schoolboys at which he hinted would merely have led to unpleasant results. Then he let fall the words: "You must be careful, Andergast. Certain events in life are flattened out by our becoming too emotional about them. Emotion is like a rolling-mill; it makes everything broad and soft." Etzel was taken aback. The words reminded him of the *leitmotiv* of Trismegistos; they surprised him, coming from this source. He felt that he was not understood. It was not there that his danger lay. He imagined that it lay rather in the opposite direction. He shook his head, and did not refer to the matter again. The intelligent Camill Raff was not particularly proud of

himself when he recalled this conversation. He feared that he had lost ground with the boy, who could be resentful as only a base nature, or at times only a really great nature, can be. He did not at once discover wherein he had erred; perhaps he did not trouble himself overmuch; it was more than one could do to listen to all these voices, to do justice to all the demands made upon him, as well as leading his own life, with its baffled ambitions and financial limitations. Sometimes the boy's face would rise before him—always in profile, the head well up, boldly chiselled, haughtily erect, with no trivial softness about it—and it would dawn upon him that his verdict might have been mistaken. To-day, before five minutes had passed, he was certain of this. Etzel was strikingly changed, and in quite a different way from that to which he had referred when discussing him with Thielemann; perhaps there was even something of an insolent superiority in the boy, something that mocked at the teachers who frowningly censured him.

But what had happened to him? It was quite a business to get anything out of him. He was subtle and reserved. Camill Raff did not want to intimidate him: he was feeling his way over thin ice. When at length, with his Socratic assistance, the boy decided to vouchsafe him a little information, Raff was careful from the outset to avoid disapproval or restraint. It was desirable (he was given to understand) to reach a clear understanding of things, to take up a position, to weigh and measure, to get a notion of values. Then, when it was time to act, one had an intellectual grasp of the matter; one could proceed methodically and gradually.

"Yes, yes," said Camill Raff, repressing an ironical impulse, "Yes, that's perfectly true." He was still hopelessly at sea. It was impossible to reach a determined goal unless one could eliminate passion, declared Etzel, with the expression of an analyst who is steeled against all the tumults of the mind (he was once again entirely the "enlightened midget"). "Of course," admitted Dr. Raff, a little anxiously, laying his hand on Etzel's shoulder, as though to hold him back from some reckless plunge; "of course.

One saves oneself a great deal of trouble in that way; above all, one avoids the unforeseen. An excellent means of avoiding bogies. Dialogue, dialectic, Etzel: it's getting a bigger and bigger hold on you, and as a result there is something . . . how shall I call it . . . something self-sufficing in you. Self-sufficing. Yes, I'll call it that. But this self-sufficiency is at the same time conscienceless. I mean, from an exalted standpoint. In so far as responsibilities go on accumulating. In so far as the author of a deed is lost in the crowd. Though that would not be so bad. Anonymity is in many respects a fine thing. But, you see, Andergast, conscience, after all, is related to knowledge, to a particular kind of knowledge, and therefore, also, to judgment and to law; yes, language is so profound, so wise. Who shall say how much conscience is necessary in order to act? . . . There are so many inaccessible depths!" He stopped, frightened by the boy's look of sparkling eagerness. The reckless plunge was apparently a leap into ice-cold water. Not every organism can stand the icy cold, particularly a sudden plunge, thought Camill Raff, tensely alert as he noted Etzel's manner. They all live with their heads nowadays; at least, they propose to; that's their official slogan, if you like. That's why the reproach about excess of feeling irritated him so the other day. That's the solution. Well, well, it's better than living without thinking, better than the display of stale, diluted emotions, which made my generation believe they were so advanced. It's true, we have not got very far with the politics of the heart; the so-called heart has become an insolvent debtor. These youngsters, with their methodology, with their "intellectual analysis", with their adoption of an attitude—horrible phrase!—for the time being they have handicapped us, as they put it, and we must be thankful if they will still accept a few crumbs from us. And I'm not sure that they'll be grateful to us, even if they do. . . .

He sighed. And Etzel smiled as though Raff had spoken his thoughts aloud. Perhaps he smiled only because the other had sighed; perhaps, however, he had felt and understood everything, for he was delightfully understanding. He felt and em-

braced the whole wide world; he knew everything and had grasped everything; that was why he smiled. Once more he looked up at his teacher confidentially, and took pleasure in his young, handsome face. For a time they walked silently side by side. In his ebullition of confidence Etzel suddenly let fall a few tentative allusions which threw some light on his condition, and betrayed the fact that he was passing through a serious crisis. He spoke of a dilemma which was forcing him to a decision, and a decision which would involve a question of principle. It was a matter—he continued, with lively, gesticulating eloquence—it was a matter, not of resistance, for one could not resist the air one breathed; one could only withdraw from it, and that was a ticklish business, for one couldn't tell beforehand whether one would be able to breathe better in the new atmosphere. Thus it was not a matter of resistance, still less of contradiction. (Camill Raff, noting the boy's eager gestures, and the quick change of expression in his swarthy face, wondered whether he had not some Jewish blood in his veins.) "When nothing is said there can't be any contradiction; you understand, Dr. Raff, what I am trying to say. I am between the devil and the deep sea, and I've got to find a way out." He stood still, pressing a clenched hand to his heart, and laying the forefinger of his other hand against his nose, in a cynical gesture of bewilderment.

"Come now, get the whole thing off your chest!" said Camill Raff encouragingly. "So far, my dear fellow, you have only spoken in riddles."

Etzel, with a sudden resolve, turned to Camill Raff and asked: "Tell me, doctor, is there really such a thing as a conflict of duties?"

Raff shook his head. "H'm . . . there you have a very ancient and hotly debated problem in ethics," he replied, with a smile.

"You are begging the question," said Etzell earnestly, almost imploringly: "but I want to know. Can there be a conflict of duties, or can there be only one duty?"

"You must explain yourself more clearly, Andergast," said

Raff, driven into a corner, and astonished by the boy's categorical tone.

"Very well," nodded Etzel, "very well. But perhaps you won't think much of the explanation. And of course you'll remind me that I am only sixteen. Well, that is so. By now, sixteen years and four months. You're twice as old, aren't you? Thirty-four? Thirty-five? Yes. Frightfully old; thirty-five. Well, good God, even if I've been stuck for sixteen years in the same spot, in the same house, in the same room, I'm not a duffer; I already know a bit about my fellow-creatures, except for this trouble with my eyes. I'll have to get glasses, though Dr. Malapert doesn't recommend them. . . . As I see it, what does it matter: sixteen or nineteen or twenty-five; one can't just fold one's hands and wait; what's gained by getting older? There are cases where it's a question of now or never. . . ." He was getting involved. Camill Raff stared at him, more and more astonished. "What are you driving at, Andergast?" he inquired under his breath, feeling as though he ought to seize this fiery little fellow's hand, saying: "Take it quietly, my child; one thing at a time; don't be in too much of a hurry!"

"Just answer me this question, Dr. Raff," Etzel began again, seizing Raff's arm in his eagerness, as he had seized old Maurizius's arm a day or two earlier. "Just tell me this one thing. A man has been many years in prison. It is possible that he was unjustly condemned. It is possible that one can manage to prove this. Ought one to be deterred by any circumstances whatever? Ought one to hesitate or consider? Could there be any other duty in such a case? Answer me that, doctor; yes or no?"

Yes or no! Again he was seeking the unconditional, the enthusiastic unconditional, the moral inspiration; and again he wanted an unpremeditated answer, just as he had wanted poor Robert Thielemann to give an unpremeditated answer. How could one do such a thing; how could a Camill Raff throw his experience and knowledge of the world to the winds, and encourage a half-grown boy in Heaven only knew what sort of

perilous lunacy? Nevertheless, here was something that shook his knowledge and experience of the world to their very foundations. They began to waver as in an earthquake; prudence, foresight, fear of possible consequences, knowledge of the futility of action—all these collapsed, leaving only this ardent young boy with his “yes or no”. And so Camill Raff, almost against his will, with a kind of compulsion, a sort of defiant rebellion against his own reason, replied: “Whether one ought, Andergast. . . . I don’t know. . . . I don’t know . . . whether one ought or can. You perhaps . . . perhaps you ought and could.” He paused. Etzel looked at him with a smile that was radiant with gratitude. Silently they walked a little farther together; then they parted with a silent grip of the hands.

What is happening there? thought Camill Raff; he was sober enough now, and full of doubts and hesitations. What is the boy thinking of? As a conscientious teacher, ought he not to warn Etzel’s father? This, however, would mean sacrificing for ever the friendship of this extraordinary boy, and he would see himself as a liar and a maker of phrases. What had he got into his head, this boy, little more than a child? A jump into ice-cold water! Camill Raff feared lest the plunge into ice-cold water should injure this delicate organism past repair. Impossible to discover what had so evidently swept the boy out of his disinterested, desultory ease in the direction of a definite goal. The mind of a boy of sixteen must revolve in a free orbit, he told himself; it must move in the illusion of infinity. If he is compelled to give up the freedom of dreaming and playing for a definite aim, inevitably he begins to suffer, because he suspects, and very soon realizes, that he is being forced to renounce that blissful confusion, that blessed and immeasurable abundance, for whose loss life will never be able to indemnify him.

6

It was a long while since the *Generalin* had been so startled as she was when Etzel asked her for three hundred marks. It was on a week-day that he came; he surprised her in her studio,

where she was painting a flower-piece, threw his arms round her neck, and then, without a word of introduction or preparation, made his request in one breathless sentence. At first the old lady did not know what to reply. She put down her palette and stared at Etzel in dismay. "Are you crazy, child?" she asked, with white lips. "Where am I to find so much money? How am I to give it to you on the spur of the moment? And what do you want it for? And even if I could give it to you, even if I could spare it, how could I justify such recklessness to myself? I should feel as if I were taking part in some wicked plot!"

Yes, yes, said Etzel's expression of blazing impatience; I knew, of course, that you would have to say all that; I will wait until you've said your little piece. When she had said it he knelt down, took the old lady's white, slender hands in his own, which were no less small and slender, though they were browner, and the impatience of his expression changed to an earnestness which the widow had never yet seen on his countenance, and which at once robbed her of that comfortable superiority with which nature had endowed her by virtue merely of her start of fifty-seven years. If he did not tell her the reason for his request (this was roughly what Etzel said) it was because she would neither understand nor approve of that reason. Because she would be obliged to prevent him from doing the thing for which he needed the money. Of course, she could now, already, go and tell on him, since, by his mere request, he had put himself in her hands. But she would not do that. She would never do such a thing as that. It would never occur to her for a moment that he needed this money for a bad purpose. She had merely to look at him as he knelt there before her. Did she think anything bad of him? No. He had no debts; he did not want to buy anything for himself. Should he swear to this? No! Should he give her his word of honour? No! His honour, where she was concerned, was implicit in his kneeling before her. Well, then! "Listen, grandmother! Listen carefully! We won't waste words on the matter. You are going to lend me the money. When I am of age I shall return it to you. Don't laugh. It's an

eternity till then, of course, but you know I am safe to pay you, in spite of the eternity." (Apparently he imagined that the three hundred marks would last him five years; a delightful example of his conceptions of time and money; but the widow did not smile; she merely gently shook her head.) He concluded: "You see, I am not coaxing, and I am not begging; I have simply come to you because I don't know of anyone else in the world."

The *Generalin*, with the little finger of her left hand pressed against her lips, sat motionless awhile. Then she rose, beckoned Etzel to follow her, and went into her bedroom. This was furnished with white enamelled furniture; it contained a bed with a canopy reaching to the floor, and looked like the bedroom of a schoolgirl. She tripped across to a folding desk, opened it, and took from it a little box, incrustcd with mother-of-pearl, and this she unlocked with a minute golden key, which she wore on a ribbon round her neck (the whole episode reminding Etzel of a person in a fairy-tale), pulled out five one-hundred-mark notes, counted them, and handed three of them to the boy. "That five hundred is my money for the whole month," she said, "including the rent. I shan't find it easy, my boy. My means are very limited, I must tell you; but no more nonsense about repaying it, or anything of that sort. I do think that you. . . . I wish to believe. . . . It's queer, the whole business. It gives me quite a queer feeling, little Etzel. . . ." Etzel went up to her almost humbly, took her face between his two hands, and kissed her full on the mouth. Then he looked her in the eyes, with that indescribable earnestness which had already more than once perturbed her, and whispered: "Good-bye, dear old grandmother." When she looked up he was already at the front door.

CHAPTER V

I

THREE days after his visit to his grandmother Etzel left his father's house and the city. It was the last day but one of the Easter holidays, a Tuesday. On the Monday evening he told Rie that he had arranged a trip to Hohen Kanzel with Thielemann and the two Förster-Lörings. They were to start at six o'clock in the morning, and return on the Wednesday afternoon; Rie was to put up some food for him. It had been raining since midday, and to Rie's observation that it would very likely rain on the following day also, he replied that they had decided to go whatever the weather was like. "If it depended upon you, Rie," he said, looking at her teasingly, "I should always stop in my room, like a good little boy. What you'd like best of all would be to tie me to the leg of a chair." As a matter of fact Rie did not approve of such enterprises; any deviation from that which had been consecrated by daily routine was abhorrent to her. Now, since Herr von Andergast had already given his consent, she was obliged to yield. But it struck her as peculiar that Etzel, after he had packed his rucksack, should have been fidgeting about his room until late at night, opening and shutting his drawers, and rustling his papers, and that he should have been unusually silent as he did so. Moreover, the size of the rucksack surprised her when he left his room next morning. It was as large as a bale, and he was hardly able to lift it on to his back, so immoderately big and heavy was the thing. She asked him, wonderingly, why he was taking so many things for just one day; he replied, blushing, that there were books in it which he had borrowed from the Förster-Lörings, and which he was going to return to them, since he had in any case to pass their house; and also a coat which Robert had recently lent him. His face betrayed that he was lying; Rie knew it; she always knew when he was lying; but she thought no further about the matter, and was even touched when he reproached her for getting up so early; for they had agreed, the night before, that

he was to breakfast at the station. She had been anxious, however, to show what a sacrifice she could make for him; that this demonstration had not been ignored lessened her dismay at the dark, wet morning. To supplement his other provisions, she put four sausage sandwiches into his pocket. He thanked her, turned back at the front door, gave her a hearty kiss, and went out.

On that same morning Herr von Andergast's professional duties called him to Limburg. He left word that he would return on Thursday, by dinner-time. Late on the Wednesday evening, when Etzel failed to return, Rie became uneasy. At eleven o'clock she decided to telephone the Förster-Lörings. The Thielemanns had no telephone in their flat, or she would have applied to them, for she knew Robert, who often came to the house, better than she knew the Förster-Lörings. It was some time before the call was answered. She heard with some consternation that the two boys were in; they had gone to bed long ago, and they had not spent a day in the country, either that day or the day before; there had not even been any talk of their doing so. In her dismay she dropped the telephone, hurried into the maids' room, and woke up the cook, to consult with her. In the end she allowed herself to be reassured; nevertheless, she could not sleep; she wandered about the flat until half-past one, peering out of the window every ten minutes, watching and listening, a prey to every kind of anxiety, imagining every possible sort of catastrophe—crimes, accidents, kidnapping. Not until her legs failed her did she go to bed, and there, to tell the truth, she slept quite soundly, in spite of her anxiety, waking rather later than her usual hour. The day, with its familiar duties, calmed her a little, and every time the door-bell rang she gave a sigh of relief, and although she was disappointed on each occasion she was quite confident of the boy's return. But when towards ten o'clock she sent the maid to the 'Thielemanns', and the girl came back with the same report that the Förster-Lörings had already given, she once more began to conjure up all sorts of dreadful pictures. To escape these she dressed, and went into the town to order some things for the house. When she returned it was one

o'clock. Her first question was: "Has he come back?" No, was the answer. Before she could conceal her dismay the front door opened, and Herr von Andergast stood before her. She turned to him, clasping her hands: "Herr Baron, Etzel has not come home."

Herr von Andergast handed the maid his portmanteau, hat, and coat, and said, faintly surprised: "Really? That's curious." With a scrutinizing glance at Rie's white, flaccid face, he went to his room. There on his desk, among the other letters which had come during his absence, was a letter from Etzel.

2

He read it, with an unchanging countenance. He leaned back in his chair, and gazed upwards. He seemed interested in a fly which was dashing to and fro against the ceiling. After a time he picked up the envelope, and looked at the postmark. The letter had been posted in the town on Tuesday morning. Presently he picked up the telephone, called up the chief of police, and informed him that he would call on him at a quarter-past three. At lunch he was absolutely silent. Rie vainly made several attempts to turn the conversation to the subject which lay so near her heart; Herr von Andergast seemed to be quite obtuse, and completely absorbed in his own thoughts, as usual. But when they rose from the table he asked her to come to his room, and there he drily requested her to tell him anything that she had noticed in connection with Etzel's leaving the house. The coherence of her narrative suffered under the disapproving glance of the violet-blue eyes. Herr von Andergast had the air of being excessively bored by her volubility. She came out with the fact of the voluminous rucksack as though it were a discovery which she had only just made, with "oh, yes", and "of course", and "who would have thought of such a thing?" Herr von Andergast agreed with her, soberly. True, one cannot always think; that is too much to expect. She looked at him in perplexity. Her mouth quivered as though she were going to cry. Herr von Andergast wanted to know which of Etzel's clothes and books were missing. He would expect to receive information

on the point that evening. He then gave her to understand that the audience was at an end.

The conference with the president of police, Herr von Altschul, took the form of a consultation of two colleagues. First of all, Herr von Andergast gave the official notification of the boy's disappearance, and the necessary description. During their further conversation, after the president had expressed the proper sympathy, and even a certain degree of astonishment, Herr von Andergast hinted that he would like the authorities to show a certain indulgence in the matter of the pursuit and arrest of the fugitive, as well as all possible secrecy, especially in respect of the Press. The president understood; he would give the necessary orders. To the question whether there was any reason, or whether any reason could be imagined, which could have induced the young man to run away, Herr von Andergast answered in the negative. (On this I need hardly comment, for it was obvious from his behaviour to Rie, to whom he said not a word about Etzel's letter, that he had made up his mind not to mention it; that he would behave simply as though it had not been written.) The chief of police continued his examination, which, of course, in the case of such a person as the Baron, could only take the form of a series of amiable inquiries. Had the boy made any preparations? Only those which were absolutely indispensable, replied Herr von Andergast. Had he confided his plans to anyone in the house, or to any of his schoolfellows? Herr von Andergast shrugged his shoulders. Not so far as he knew, he replied; but so short a time had elapsed that he had not yet been able to make any comprehensive inquiries. But had this boy of sixteen enough money to leave home, to leave home, apparently, for some considerable time? There again, Herr von Andergast replied, he could give no precise information. In all probability it was only a stupid boyish prank, but the consideration which had just been mentioned did make the matter somewhat disquieting; that he could not deny.—Had the Baron any idea as to where the boy might have gone? Had he had any private connections? Any secret

correspondence? Did he belong to any political society of young people?—Nothing of the sort was conceivable, replied Herr von Andergast, coldly.—And there were no family connections which might have had some secret influence over him? (The president, of course, was aware of the Baron's family affairs, and he put the question hesitatingly, as though asking pardon for the indiscretion.) Herr von Andergast dropped his eyelids, and replied, with somewhat unreasonable acerbity: "No, that's not it either. Assuredly not that." He reached for his hat and rose to his feet, saying: "There is something which should be added to the personal description. My son is very short-sighted; to such a degree that he cannot distinguish faces more than ten yards away. The condition has remained stationary of recent years, so that the doctor has advised against glasses for the present. This defect will, I think, facilitate his arrest."

"I think so too," replied the president. He too stood up, putting his notebook aside. After the attorney-general had left him he remained sunk in thought. Men of his profession have an extraordinary sense for the completeness or incompleteness of declarations, for the slightest suppression, for the least mental reservation. He could not get away from the impression that Herr von Andergast had failed to be completely honest with him; that he had found it necessary to draw a veil over essential details. However, he told himself, he need not worry about that. But if he really believed that it would be a simple matter to arrest the fugitive and return him to his father, he was completely mistaken. The official machinery operated with its usual precision; the railway detectives were notified; the police-stations, the frontier guards and the gendarmerie were set to work; nothing was omitted, except the public advertisement. But this, in all probability, would have had no better result. It was as though the boy had disappeared off the face of the earth.

3

Etzel's letter, which has been mentioned more than ⁷once, was not calculated to improve Herr von Andergast's temper. As a

father, he was profoundly hurt, and his sense of authority was offended. He felt, moreover, that as a man, as a human being, and a friend (for he had deceived himself to the extent of believing that he was Etzel's friend) he had been disgracefully hoodwinked, and had been cunningly cheated of the fruit of that confidence which he had so generously extended. The very first sentence of the letter was ridiculous: "I cannot stay with you any longer; my decision to leave your house is not a frivolous one; I have struggled with it conscientiously." So he had struggled, had he? Leave the house; a decision; what can justify you, what can empower you to make such a decision, you impertinent urchin? Who has taught you to judge? How do you know what conscience demands or forbids? And who has asked you for reasons? And then the next sentence: "I cannot say that anything stands between us, because everything stands between us. I am defenceless against your contempt for my youth, but perhaps I can reach the goal that I have set myself, and thus compel you to respect me in spite of my youth." The impudence of it! One may know too much of the world to make the commonplace complaint of the parent, that one's children are ungrateful, although one is not afraid of being regarded as *passé* where one perceives that they are simply unparalleled in their tactless over-estimation of all that they do and are and purpose. But what a tone!—"I cannot say that anything stands between us, because everything stands between us." That did raise the question as to whether one had not failed in the matter of salutary chastisement, however lightly such educational methods may be regarded to-day. And then the culminating passage: "Since I have known of the case of Leonhart Maurizius, and of his fate, and the part you played in condemning him, I can no longer rest. The truth must come to light; I mean to discover the truth." A sentence which, in spite of its foolish presumption, deserved only a pitying shrug of the shoulders.

The whole letter read thus: "Dear father: I cannot stay with you any longer; my decision to leave your house is not a frivolous one; I have struggled with it conscientiously. I beg you with all

my heart not to regard what I am doing as a lack of respect; I am quite conscious of what I owe you. But we have no way of approach to one another, and it is useless for me to look for any. I cannot say that anything stands between us, because everything stands between us. I am defenceless against your contempt for my youth, but perhaps I can reach the goal that I have set myself, and thus compel you to respect me in spite of my youth. Thought generates thought, they say, but the truth is external, and it seems to me that one must achieve it by working at it, as though it were a creation. Without a lever one cannot lift a heavy weight, and for me a certain name has become a lever. Since I have known of the case of Leonhart Maurizius, and of his fate, and the part you played in condemning him, I can no longer rest. The truth must come to light; I mean to discover the truth. I have one great request to make you; I hardly dare to write it, hardly dare to hope that you will grant it: do not pursue me, do not have me pursued; leave me free; I cannot say for just how long, but do not be my opponent in this matter. Your son, Etzel."

"Delightful!" was Herr von Andergast's sarcastic comment: "to say nothing of all the rest, he would like to enjoy the luxury of my silent approval! But one must get on with the day's work, however painful and irritating the matter may be. Since I did not foresee the affair, since I have allowed myself to be taken by surprise, and have been fooled by a young fool, and so doubly fooled, I must get used to the idea that I have been led by the nose by a young scamp."

The letter was best forgotten. The thought of it made him feel like a man going about with a sharp stone in his shoe, who can find no opportunity of removing it with decorum. But it was not so easy to forget. Herr von Andergast had been reluctant to use the ponderous machinery of the State in respect of a "stupid boyish prank". He could not bring himself to regard the boy's flight as anything more than a foolish escapade, and he could not accept the motive assigned in the letter. Any consideration of the motive he regarded as positively ignominious.

He had the gift of positively refusing to think of any subject with which he did not wish to concern himself. As the days went by, and as the measures which he had taken remained fruitless in spite of their proved efficiency, the "stupid boyish prank" appeared in a new light, and compelled an attention which it did not deserve. This brought with it a feeling of discomfort, as when one looks at a clock on which one has read the hour a countless number of times, with mechanical indifference, only to discover that the hands are missing. And then there was Rie's attitude of grief, complaint, question, reproach, and speculation, all mute and timidly importunate; it was enervating by force of its persistence. Moreover, it was necessary to telephone to various people: to the headmaster of the gymnasium, to the form-master, Dr. Raff (taking this opportunity to ask him to call in person, on Sunday, because he perceived that the man was embarrassed, and was keeping something back), and to all sorts of acquaintances, who had heard of the boy's mysterious disappearance, and could not refrain from asking inquisitive and sympathetic questions. It was all most annoyingly inconvenient; so much so that Herr von Andergast thought of taking a holiday and going away for a few weeks. But this he did not do.

4

The *Generalin* had telephoned to Rie on Friday, and from her she had heard the whole story. That evening she called up her son. He had expected her call; he suspected his mother of aiding and abetting the boy. Since it could not be assumed that he had gone away without a pfennig in his pocket, and since his grandmother was the first person to whom he would apply (he had often had proof of her generosity, so that success was fairly certain), his suspicion was from the outset almost a conviction. The old lady said, in a tremulous voice, that she was ill, that she could not move out of the house, that she had telephoned to his chambers in vain; he would please come to see her at once, that very evening. Herr von Andergast ordered a taxicab. After five minutes of apparently random conversation he had

obtained her confession that she had given Etzel three hundred marks. The playful certainty with which he attained this result amazed her; she stared at him helplessly, with open mouth. She was lying on her bed, a satin coverlet over her fragile person, her little head reclining mournfully on the embroidered pillows. As for Herr von Andergast, no one could have been more courteous. He had picked up an ivory paper-knife from the bed-table, and he held it between his two forefingers. His face betrayed not a flicker of emotion. His tactics, of course, consisted in expressing by his silence everything which he disdained to say in words, anything which might be refuted or discussed. He was aware of the weight and the effect of his silence in such cases as this; he was able to calculate them, just as an artillery officer calculates the trajectory and the incidence of a shell. And he obtained the expected result. The old lady lost countenance; her eyes grew dark with anger; she rebelled against the torture of his courteous and significant silence; and she suddenly cried that it was he himself who had made a mess of things: it was all his own fault; what with him and his precious military discipline, the child had probably run away. . . . Well . . . perhaps he had gone to his mother and . . . well . . . why not? . . . Good God, to have someone make a bit of a fuss of him just for once. It was quite possible that that was just what he needed—just a little petting. . . .

Herr von Andergast looked up with interest: "Now, look here, mama," he said, in cold astonishment, "that is the first I have heard of this. Who ever would have thought of such a thing? The idea would never have occurred to me. How do you come to think such a thing? Is it a mere assumption, or have you a definite reason? How in the world could he have learned. . . . In that case there must have been the most contemptible treachery. . . . Have you by any chance been in touch with her? I mean, have you any information . . . do you know where she is living?"

His violet-blue eyes rested with steely composure on the face of the old lady, whose terror-stricken eyes tried to evade him,

like a couple of chickens who know that a hawk is hovering above them. She made a gesture of protest. "No, no!" she assured him, with a hasty sigh, with an expression of regret which sounded so genuine that Herr von Andergast could not doubt her words: "Why should I know? How could I know? You and your system have succeeded in bandaging the eyes and closing the mouths of everyone about you. Who would dare, even if he knew? Sometimes, Wolf, I ask myself whether you are really still a living human being with a heart in your body, like other people. You frighten one. You have only to come into a room, and people are afraid."

Herr von Andergast rose to his feet with a smile. "I hope your indisposition is only temporary, my dear mother," he remarked, in a tone between indulgent consideration and weary indifference. "I shall in any case ask Nanny to let me know how you are to-morrow, and what the doctor prescribes." He made as though to kiss her hand and take leave of her, but she, wounded by his haughty evasiveness, and angered by his imperturbable calm, cried commandingly: "Stop! Not so fast! We haven't done with this yet. Where is Etzel? Where is your son? You don't know? And I am supposed to know? You think I am in league with him? That's just what I told him. I know the way your mind goes to work. And now, what's to be done? What are you going to do? Of course, you'll set your police dogs on his trail. You'll put his back up still more. That's your first and last thought—the police. Have you the least idea what sort of a boy he is? What there is in him, what's amiss with him? No, you don't know a thing, not a single thing about him; you don't know a thing about anyone! You drove poor Sophia out into the world like a dog; you drove her . . . her lover to perjure himself until there was nothing left for him to do but put a bullet through his brain. And even if it was all in accordance with the law, and the code of honour, and as correct as a military parade. . . . Well, I won't say anything; I won't say a word, but there are times when it sears my very soul, when I lie quietly here and think it all over." And here she stopped;

suddenly she was startled, for she saw that her son had turned pale. She had allowed herself to be carried away. Her anxiety about Etzel, and all the thoughts which she had suppressed for so many years, had kindled her inflammable temperament, and she had thoughtlessly drawn aside the curtain from the disastrous past, and had pointed to the spot which—if one eliminated all other events—outwardly had the appearance of irremediable guilt. But behind it there was a life, there were human destinies. She regretted her words; they had hardly escaped her lips before she pressed her hands to her eyes and sobbed quietly. Wolf von Andergast's face had, indeed, become white as chalk. Slowly he raised his left hand and tugged at his grey pointed beard; he quickly moistened his lips with the tip of his tongue, and his reddened eyelids sank until only a thin chink of his eyes was visible; and he said, very quietly, "Very good, mama. I have no intention of correcting your romantic notions. In the future, be so good as to omit all allusions to my person and to my past, if you wish the occasional intercourse between us to continue." A typical Andergast utterance.

The old lady was sorry; she was sorry; but what use was that? The people who say the wrong things in their haste find themselves in a far worse position than the person of whose actions they have good reason to complain. The least suspicion of injustice gives the other a tenfold advantage, and they are overcome with shame and repentance (to both of which the old lady now surrendered herself).

The next morning Herr von Andergast summoned Rie to another audience. He could not get the old lady's words: "Perhaps he has gone to his mother", out of his head. Since the *Generalin* maintained, credibly enough, that she had not given the boy any information, it could only be Rie, with her usual stupidity, who was guilty of doing so; but where could she have got her knowledge? That the boy could not go to his mother was obvious; he would hardly be able to cross the French frontier; moreover, it must not be assumed, however romantic and incomprehensible the adventure might be, that the reason which

he had expressly stated as the motive of his flight was a falsehood. There was no reason to think it untrue, and it was not the boy's way to lie. Nevertheless, Herr von Andergast was unwilling to drop the clue which he had accidentally picked up; he would follow it, if only in order to learn something of the people with whom he was dealing. According to him, everyone, even the most irreproachable and unassailable of men, had some corner in his soul in which were lurking the germs of crime; and this was why one never really quite knew people! And as for his wife, who had changed her place of domicile in so disconcerting a fashion, and who had recently seen fit to worry him with letters about Etzel, it was impossible to foresee to what methods she might resort, in violation of their agreement, in her suddenly awakened, so-called yearning for the boy. So he sent for Rie.

She was much too broken by his merciless pressure to deny that she had obtained the knowledge of his wife's change of address from the envelopes of her last letters, and she admitted with tears that she had mentioned it to Etzel, but she had not meant to do anything wrong. Herr von Andergast's comment was: "I regard your behaviour as a breach of confidence. If I do not act accordingly, it is due to the fact that you have been in my house for so many years." This conversation left him with a bitter taste in his mouth; for he felt as though his "system" were turning its spikes towards himself, as though his spies were dogging his own heels, as though his creatures had turned traitors. An irritating interlude; that was how the whole thing had looked at first—a young fellow with some overwrought idea in his head runs away from his father's house; he is caught, and disposed of for a while, and that is the end of the affair. But here there was something different; yes, it was perhaps a little different. But how? Why? What was it that was "different"? What had gone wrong, what was so strange and perverse and depressing about it all?

He had intended to ring up Herr von Altschul, to inquire whether any trace of the fugitive had been found. But he did not do so. Every time he lifted the receiver of the telephone he

would press his lips together as though seized with a sudden aversion, and would sit at his desk for a while, absorbed in gloomy reflection.

5

Towards Camill Raff Herr von Andergast purposely adopted a cordial tone. He pressed his hand as though he had long wished for a confidential interview, and as though he assumed that the desire was mutual. As a matter of fact, he regarded him merely as an insignificant little schoolmaster, in spite of his reputation; many people thought a good deal of his intellect and his culture, but Herr von Andergast did not share this opinion. He did not think much of schoolmasters of any description; he concealed his opinion carefully, but that was how he felt; perhaps it was a survival from feudal times, or it might be due to the fact that strong personalities often display a certain intolerance of the stock of knowledge which is accessible to all alike, and is therefore bound to be somewhat diluted. Camill Raff, at all events, was surprised by his friendly reception. He knew Herr von Andergast only from his formal visits to the Gymnasium. It was his custom to question the form-master, twice or thrice a term, as to his son's progress. Camill Raff had always been glad when he could feel that this dry, ceremonious call was over, and that he had not forgotten his good manners. Now he was confronted by an amiable gentleman who was a delightful conversationalist. People in limited circumstances are always charmed by the polite advances of those who are more fortunately placed; no amount of philosophy or democratic pride can save them from this. Dr. Raff was far too intelligent not to be aware of the fact, and he was on his guard. Nevertheless, he succumbed to the charm of this man, who, in respect of his versatility and his knowledge of the world, was infinitely his superior, and he did not notice the trap which Herr von Andergast had laid for him. For the Baron had some reason to suspect (here too there was suspicion, there was suspicion all along the line; the net was breaking, and everywhere he saw treacherous subordinates) that Camill Raff's

influence on Etzel had not been exclusively educational; that he had been guilty of a harmful and perhaps even culpable toleration of dangerous tendencies.

Camill Raff, for his part, had a certain intriguing purpose. He had a fairly exact knowledge and an even more accurate conception of Etzel's personality and character, and he said to himself: this father has probably no real understanding of his son; if anyone can give him this understanding it is myself, and I shall do it in a way that he won't forget in a hurry. He was actuated by two motives: firstly, by something akin to vanity, a feeling from which even a mere narrator is not quite free in such a case; and secondly, he felt the need of relieving the unconscious pressure which Herr von Andergast was exerting on him, despite his friendliness, by means of self-revelation. And so, each of the men being absorbed in his own special interests, each treated the other with perfect amenity. Raff told the Baron how he had come to know Etzel at the school camp in the Odenwald, eighteen months ago, and how he had been quite unusually attracted by the boy, so that when he had been appointed to the gymnasium here he had rejoiced at the fortunate chance which had made Etzel his pupil. He had given the boy a great deal of attention, especially during the last six months, while he had been in the upper second form, which he, Raff, was teaching.—Herr von Andergast leaned forward a little, his hands over his crossed knees, his manner and his attitude expressing a courteous curiosity, which flattered Camill Raff, and led him on to make a thorough analysis of Etzel's character, full of delicacy, full of sympathy, full of the secret intention of telling the father something new and unexpected about his son. He spoke of the lucidity and transparency of Etzel's character. It was not transparency in the usual sense; his was not what one simply calls an open character. Open, no; open, by no means, the boy was not reserved, but he was, rather, equipped with a series of wrappings. What Camill Raff meant by transparency related to his inner make-up, to the lucidity of his whole personality; it was a kind of spiritual orderliness. Everything about

him always rang true. In dealing with him one always had the agreeable feeling: that's right, that's how it should be; it could only be like that; that is how one does a thing; that is how one says this or that, how one acknowledges a friendly service, or receives an insult; that is how one behaves when one is embarrassed or angry; just so and not otherwise; simple because that is the sort of person one is, because one has the gift of being what one is, and does not need to appear to be what one would like to be; an advantage so rare that only a few people can appreciate how unusual it is, although it is always on most people's tongues. Of course, this requires a certain sort of courage. But courage in such cases is only a question of tempo. Many things in life which we regard as the outcome of a moral disposition are only a result of speed. Camill Raff had sometimes compared the speed of reaction in boys. He found that the slow minds (which may, of course, be housed in swift and elastic bodies) tend more to evil than the quick and fiery ones. What, for example, is a love of a justice—what is the expression of it—but a lightning-like ignition in the brain of the glowing and colliding associations of the imagination? He had observed Etzel in his quarrels with his comrades, and in his games, in situations where decency, secrecy, readiness to be of help, and chivalry were involved. He was always astonished by the justice and the energy of his attitude in any sort of conflict. Once, in the classroom, the boys had played a nasty trick on the mathematical master. He was fond of sweets, and always carried a bag of them in his coat-pocket. The boys, of course, knew this, and one day they mixed some strong purgative tablets with his lozenges. When the master appeared next morning he was furious: he said that he did not intend to take any steps to discover the guilty party; they were all involved, and he would therefore content himself with holding one boy responsible, and punishing him; but this boy could escape punishment by reporting the real culprit. He therefore selected one boy at random, and asked him to make the confession which, as may be imagined, was not forthcoming, and imposed a very severe punishment on him. This procedure

aroused Etzel's anger. It was more than he could endure that an innocent boy—and it happened that the boy selected was really the one least involved in the scrape—should suffer for the guilty; so he got up and denounced himself. He had done this thing; he was the one to be punished. This made a great impression on the class; the boys would not permit such a thing: his statement was contradicted, and there was a regular little revolt. Fortunately, the master had enough sense to refrain from pushing the matter to extremes; his cross-examination of Etzel was not particularly drastic, and he left the classroom, to consult, as he said, with the master in charge. Camill Raff did his best to calm him, and saw to it that the matter should blow over, partly in order to spare the man himself, and to save him from further ridicule. Afterwards he had had a long talk with Etzel. As he described this conversation an enigmatic and almost mischievous smile played over his handsome, melancholy face. "I had the greatest difficulty in holding my own with him, what with his preposterous indignation, and the cool effrontery with which he demanded of people what they should really be forced to do of their own accord, in justice and reason, if they were not to be for ever causing unspeakable trouble and confusion," said Camill Raff. "That was about his meaning; I am repeating it in a somewhat more complicated form; but that was the gist of it. People should act logically; the man who carries on a business should understand that business; a judge should condemn a man only when there is not a shadow of doubt as to his guilt. I felt obliged to reply: My dear boy, heroes and martyrs have shed their blood over these truisms."

6

Herr von Andergast had lowered his eyelids over his violet-blue eyes. It was as though the curtain had been dropped during a change of scene in the theatre. He was almost motionless. From time to time he uttered a half-perfunctory, half-sceptical "H'm". Camill Raff, having no conception of the man's real character, of his icy pride, of his psychical susceptibility, of the

rigidity of his opinions, felt that it was incumbent on him to explain the boy even more fully. He wanted to convince Herr von Andergast (and this was the height of *naïveté*); to convince him of what? In the end he no longer knew himself; he was conscious only of the other's stony, silent opposition, and he rebelled against it. He told the Baron the story of Karl Zehntner, of the theft of the five-mark note, and how Etzel had confessed his scruples at having got a comrade into trouble by acting too hastily. Herr von Andergast had not heard of this incident; he listened, but his face betrayed only the same polite curiosity. Camill Raff continued: "Such a sensitive sense of proportion is absolutely impressive. I at all events know of nothing that impresses me more profoundly. I mean the measure of what another person can stand, and what it is permissible to put upon him. . . ."

"You have certainly made quite a study of the boy," interposed Herr von Andergast drily.—"Certainly, Baron; I regarded it as one of my duties."—"At the same time you seem to be trying to place a halo of virtue around his head. You will forgive me if I regard this as a little exaggerated. The boy has his good qualities; in some respects he is not lacking in ability; and he is not altogether ill-bred; he is rather impetuous, and at times rather audacious, and, let us frankly confess, when he wants to get his way he is not without a good share of cunning. Or do you think I am doing him an injustice?" Camill Raff felt rather that Herr von Andergast was doing Camill Raff an injustice in speaking with a certain malice. He replied that he could not agree with the Baron; that he had never observed anything cunning about Etzel, but something quite different, a very striking acuteness or perspicuity; *that* he certainly had; a sort of Red Indian instinct when it was a matter of bringing some hidden thing or circumstance to light. At the Odenwald camp there had been an incident which had earned the then fourteen-year-old boy the reputation of a "pocket Sherlock Holmes". There was a boy of seventeen; his name was Rosenau; he was a room-mate of Etzel's. He was not particularly liked; in the first place because he was a Jew, then because he was distrustful

and unfriendly, and finally because he wrote poetry. Since what he wrote was trash, a lukewarm *réchauffé* of well-known models, with a not very pleasant erotic flavour, the boys were not wholly unjustified in teasing him. But this, of course, embittered him all the more. For the rest, he was a decent enough fellow; there was no bad blood in him. But he had got himself thoroughly disliked; there was nothing that could be done about it, and most of the boys wanted to get rid of him, or at least to spoil his visit to the camp. One day one of the masters asked for a book from the camp library. They looked for it for a while, and then someone said: "Rosenau probably has it; he did not, as a matter of fact, borrow it; but he's always grabbing books from the other boys." Rosenau was not in at the time, but they decided without more ado to open his locker, the key of which was hanging on a nail. The master rummaged about among his things, opened a drawer, and suddenly stood there shaking his head, with a gloomy expression on his face. In the drawer there lay half a dozen photographs of the most obscene nature; the sort of things which could hardly be shown outside a brothel, and then only with precaution. With the exception of Rosenau, all the boys were present; it was shortly before dinner, and they all witnessed the horrid discovery; a few jeered and sneered, but contempt and anger predominated. While the master was sending for the director and asking him to come downstairs, Rosenau came in. He was called up to the locker and shown the photographs. Etzel was standing close beside him, and he at once had the impression that the boy knew nothing about the photographs, and that someone had played a disgusting trick on him. A glance at Rosenau's face confirmed his conviction. No one could have feigned such shocked amazement, such helpless dismay. No one else had the slightest doubt, and Rosenau's protestations were received with contemptuous silence. The director of the camp had gone to Würzburg that morning and was not expected back until the next day. The horrid pictures were for the time being confiscated, and Rosenau was locked in his room until they should decide what was to be done. All his comrades con-

spicuously avoided him. He sat brooding in a corner of the room, with his face in his hands. Etzel, in the meantime, had made an observation which seemed to him important. He had noticed that the photograph lying on the top of the rest was spotted with blood. The blood had run in a thin streak right across the picture. He asked himself where the blood came from. He went quietly to Rosenau's locker and pulled out the drawer; he found, close to the lock, a nail with the point projecting; he found, too, that there were bloodstains on the bottom of the drawer. Then he said to himself: whoever put those photographs into the drawer was obviously in a hurry, and hurt himself on that nail; he must have lost a good deal of blood, and one ought still to be able to see the wound. A little later, when the room was empty, the boys having gone out to play football, he went up to Rosenau and said: "Show me your hands." The boy looked at him in surprise, and obeyed; he showed him his open hands. There was not a scratch on them. Etzel thought for a long time. At last he decided what to do. He asked for two hours' leave of absence, walked to Amorbach, which was not far distant, and there bought a bagful of hazel-nuts. Towards evening, when they were all gathered together in the room, he brought out the bag and announced that he was going to distribute the nuts; they were going to amuse themselves by cracking them; it was great fun, and it made a deuce of a row; they were to hold out their hands in turn, and he would give each of them a few nuts. This was done, with a good deal of laughter. When he came to the ninth boy Etzel detected the wounded hand; there was a long red scratch on the inner side, just as he had supposed, for the wound could not have been on the back of the hand if it had been inflicted as he imagined. The boy with the wounded hand was Erich Fenchel; he was the oldest boy in the group, almost eighteen years old, and hated because of his brutality and love of fighting. He tyrannized over the other boys; he had his favourites and his aversions among them; Etzel was neither one nor the other. Fenchel did not quite trust him. All the boys curried favour with him, excepting Etzel; since Fenchel had once boasted that

he had violated a deaf and dumb girl, his mere proximity had made Etzel shudder. He might have denounced Erich Fenchel, but he wanted to be certain of his guilt, so he gave no sign that he had noticed anything. The boys all cracked their nuts merrily, and he among the rest. When they had gone to bed, and the lights were put out, he remained awake. For hours he lay quietly there, waiting. It might have been one o'clock in the morning when he silently got up, made sure that all the boys were sound asleep, slipped between the beds to Fenchel's locker, and unlocked it. That evening he had hidden a little dark-lantern, which he had bought in the town when buying the nuts, under the locker. As quiet as a mouse, he began to search the locker, screened from the room by the open door; and it was not long before he found what he was looking for. Once more his assumption had proved correct; once more his logical deliberations had triumphed: Fenchel had slipped only a few of the photographs into Rosenau's locker; the others were in his own, under his books and papers. Etzel shut the locker, slipped into bed, and slept until morning. Directly after breakfast he went to the master, told him the facts of the case, and how he had contrived to elucidate them. A quarter of an hour later Rosenau was reinstated. Fenchel, who was, by the way, a rabid anti-Semite, had taken the opportunity, when a search was being made for the book, and no one was paying any attention to him, to smuggle the photographs into Rosenau's locker. He was expelled from the camp in disgrace. From that time onwards Rosenau was attached to Etzel with an almost foolish devotion. A year later he was sent to South America by his parents, who did not know what to do with him.

Herr von Andergast was gazing down at his hands. He seemed absorbingly interested in something on the nail on one of his middle fingers; he lifted his hand to his chin, looking carefully at the nail, while he asked, as though without forethought: "You knew, of course, of my son's plan to run away?" Noting the expression of uncomfortable surprise on the face of the man before him, he added, amiably: "I could understand that. You

were the person in his confidence. I did not stand so well with him. He trusted you. I did not enjoy the privilege of his confidence in such a degree. Not that I have any wish to complain: I have no talent as a father confessor. And frankly, not the slightest inclination that way. I do not set much value on emotional secrets."

"Emotional secrets . . . that is hardly the right expression," Camill Raff ventured to interpose. The conversation was passing from the narrative to the dramatic; he suddenly saw the noose which was to be cast round his neck.

"The relation never overstepped the limits which I myself drew," he said calmly.

"You have not answered my question," continued Herr von Andergast, gently opening his eyes with the look of a wife who is complaining of neglect.

"He came to me in his secret extremity," said Camill Raff. "As an older friend, I was obliged to do what I could to help him. He came to me with a question. I am in such and such a situation: what shall I do? Or rather, can I do otherwise than thus and thus? I did not know what he had in his mind. I could not understand from his hints. In any other case I should have shrugged my shoulders, consoled him, made an evasive answer. With him that was not possible. Not at that moment. I admitted to him, at that moment, what I would not have admitted to anyone else: namely, that he should do what the spirit moved him to do. I do not deny—I am still speaking of this one moment—that I refrained from trying to dissuade him from the decision with which he was struggling. That it was such a far-reaching decision I had not, of course, the least idea."

"If you had, you would doubtless have hesitated to encourage him in such a very nebulous project?" inquired Herr von Andergast in the same gentle tone, with a sly little smile.

"That . . . I don't know . . ." replied Raff, hesitating. "There was something about him . . . I should have been ashamed to pour water into that wine . . . it is so seldom. . . . If you could only have seen him, Baron. . . ."

"To be sure. And were you not afraid of the responsibility?" continued the gentle voice.

"No," said Camill Raff, "not for a moment."

"That surprises me," replied Herr von Andergast, as he rose. "Not so much your personal attitude; that, after all, is no concern of mine; but rather—how shall I put it?—the moral latitude which you have displayed as an educator of youth." Camill Raff, who had also risen, changed colour slightly. "In regard to your personal attitude, I can only deplore that you neglected to warn me. It would have been your duty. . . ."

"I could not betray him."

"A boy not of age? Can you speak of betrayal in such a case?"

"I think one can, Baron. It seems to me that in such a case his not being of age is only a legal conception."

"Is not the legal conception sufficient when a gross impropriety may be prevented? Is there a higher conception? I am open to conviction."

"It is not sufficient, Baron. Yes, there is a higher conception."

The dramatic dialogue had thus assumed the form of a series of stichomythic replies, but the speakers had neither lost their tempers nor raised their voices; on the contrary, the one was perfectly polite, while the other was unassuming but invulnerable. Finally, as he accompanied his guest to the door, Herr von Andergast asked, as though his interest was only casual, whether Camill Raff knew where Etzel was; Raff replied that he had been extremely surprised to hear of the boy's flight; he did not, of course, know where he was. Herr von Andergast nodded solemnly, shook Raff's hand and assured him that they had had a most interesting conversation. But when Raff had closed the door the Baron stood for a long while pondering, with his underlip drawn in. On the following day he sent a letter to the school authorities in which he drew their attention to the serious dereliction of duty of which Dr. Camill Raff had been guilty in respect of his pupil Etzel Andergast, and demanded an investigation. The investigation required categorically by so influential a personage was held without delay. The consequence was that

Camill Raff was relieved of his duties for two months, and was then transferred to the gymnasium of a small provincial town in Hesse. For a man whose sphere of action had already been too limited, this was a crushing blow; one which was mentally and physically disastrous to him.

7

Some days after Camill Raff's visit, and before he had quite recovered from the impression that there was somehow something humiliating about it, Herr von Andergast invited President Sydow to supper. The president had asked him to do so, as his family had gone to the opera, and he wanted company. The food was good, but the conversation dragged. The president was a sociable man, with a fondness for telling anecdotes. Herr von Andergast had no predilection for anecdotes, but people who insist upon telling them do not ask whether the listener is interested or not; they provide the applause as well as the entertainment, so the president did not even notice his host's distraction. Herr von Sydow had the name of being a "good judge", but this reputation was based rather on a mixture of an epicurean laziness and a general contempt for mankind than on any high vocation. He felt no inclination to get to the bottom of things, and was even more reluctant to scale the heights; it was only when taking the middle course that he felt at home. In many instances his "kindliness" was no more than the coarse geniality of a moderate toper. Slow and ponderous himself, he deplored the unwieldiness of the judicial machine, and regarded the jury system, although he never protested against it, as a ridiculous farce; and as long as he sat on the bench as a criminal judge he had displayed his most amiable peculiarities when confronted by a criminal who had pleaded guilty. He would have liked to shake such a man by the hand and give him a reward. Such a man does not waste one's time, he used to say; as though a judge were intended to dream away his time in a comfortable tavern. Professionally, he and Herr von Andergast had often had serious differences; personally they were on

excellent terms, for they were so mutually remote that there was no possibility of any friction.

He left early. They had sat in the study. When Herr von Andergast was alone he opened the window to let out the cigar-smoke. It was a damp, sultry April night. The trees were dripping; the dark street looked like a great open hose-pipe. Herr von Andergast stared into the darkness. He rested his chin on his crossed hands, and stood as immovable as a pillar. When he had closed the window he sat down at his desk, took one of the legal documents from the pile lying before him, and opened it. But his eyes travelled listlessly down the page. He had a pencil in his hand; absent-mindedly he began to scribble words and figures on a blank sheet of paper. Suddenly he started. There stood the name Maurizius. He had written it without thinking or knowing what he was doing. He tore up the sheet of paper, threw it into the waste-paper basket, tossed his pencil on to his desk, and reluctantly rose to his feet. For a time he walked to and fro; then he stood still, apparently reflecting, left the room, stood in the hall for a while, at the edge of the flood of light which shone from his study, with an expression of indecision on his face, took a few steps forward, until he reached the door of Etzel's room, opened it, and went in. He switched on the electric light, carefully closed the door, looked about him with knitted brows, and, sighing deeply, sat down at the table. It was the first time since the boy's departure that he had entered his room.

With his back to the window, he leaned back in the chair in his accustomed manner, crossing his arms over his breast. There was something peculiarly silent about him. His face wore an expression of loneliness and melancholy. The tension which never left it, perhaps not even in sleep, was relaxed. It was as though the bars of the vizard of actuality which enclosed it were one by one melting away. His eyes noted everything in the room: the brass bed with the worn yellow silk coverlet, the old embroidered canvas before the stove, the two straw-bottomed chairs at either end of the table, the book-cases with their empty spaces like gaps in a set of teeth. The boy had taken the missing

books with him. An indescribable melancholy pervaded the room; Herr von Andergast could not but be conscious of it. A room which its occupant has deserted reminds one somehow of a corpse. The top of the table was covered with a chequered linoleum; round the inkstand it was spattered with ink. In one place the profile of a head had been carved into the material; it was an inexpert attempt. He never had any talent for drawing, thought Herr von Andergast. The drawer of the table stood partly open; it was apparently empty. Boys are always slovenly, thought Herr von Andergast, closing the drawer. The drawer reminded him of the incident of the photographs at the camp. He smiled a little. It was an embarrassed smile, which had, as it were, to break through the sense of discomfort which Camill Raff's narrative had left behind it. How was it that he had never heard of such episodes? How was it that one sees such a child only in the present, never in the past? That the words of yesterday are lost, that the form and fashion of last year has faded away? Is the human mind too indolent to retain the series and the sequence of events? Is it always nourished only by the moment, and therefore cheated? For the moment is a deceiver. Impossible to conceive how the boy looked at the age of ten. Or earlier perhaps—at eight, or at six. Herr von Andergast had never had him photographed; he regarded the photographing of children as a futile absurdity. But that was not the point; the point was that the picture ought to have existed in one's memory. Etzel was a beautiful child; so much Herr von Andergast thought he remembered. He remembered too that he had been irritated whenever people praised the boy's pretty face, his graceful bearing, his charming manners. As he sat there, seeking access to the past like a robber who slips into the house at night, he thought of the dark-lantern which the fourteen-year-old boy had bought in Amorbach, together with the nuts. An astonishing talent for deduction and combination; he would not have credited the boy with it! Then he suddenly saw the boy of fifteen before him, the brown curly head emerging as though from a dusty veil. "Father, look at the big atlas with me and tell me about

the ocean, and about Asia." It was pretty to see how the small white teeth gleamed in the fresh mouth. The clear, open glance—what confidence there was in it, as though Asia and the seas held no secrets from the father's omnipotence and omniscience! And at that time that was "the present". And "the present" meant that there was no time. No, curly-head, your father hasn't the time, he has to work. Curly-head does not dare to contradict him; he is only sorrowfully surprised; can there really be anything more important at this wistful moment than the atlas, and Asia, and the sea? To have no time—that is an incomprehensible locution, for there are such incalculable quantities of time lying about that one hardly knows how to master it all between waking of a morning and going to bed. The whole riddle of life is contained in "having no time".

Where can the boy be now? It is night; the trees are dripping; the street is like an open hose-pipe. Where can he be at this present moment?

Next morning his subordinates were impressed by their chief's exceptional taciturnity. They noticed, too, that he hardly seemed to grasp such questions as they had to ask him. This especially was most unusual; more than once they exchanged glances of astonishment. A little before twelve, just as he was about to leave, he sent for the director of the chancellory. When the man entered, it seemed (or was his manner assumed?) as though the Baron had forgotten why he had sent for him. "Ah, of course, my dear Haarke!" he said amiably: "have the Maurizius records of nineteen hundred five and six brought in from the assize court and send them to-day to my flat."

At three o'clock the musty records, extending over two thousand seven hundred pages, many of which had already turned yellow, were lying on Herr von Andergast's desk.

8

He began reading them that very evening. Having made up his mind, he wanted to do the thing conscientiously. Made up his mind? Strictly speaking, it could hardly be said that he had

formed a decision; his free will had had little to do with the matter. Nothing of the sort had ever happened to him before; it was an irresistible compulsion that he felt; just that. So the thing really did exist, that condition in which he had never really believed, which he had in truth regarded as a lawyer's ruse, devised for the purpose of paralysing the arm of justice, and smuggled into the statutes in order to flatter the superficial laity. It had all begun with the word Maurizius, which he had suddenly found written on a sheet of paper, which he himself had written there, he knew not how. When he had given the order to the director of the chancellory he had scarcely dared to look him in the face; he had a feeling that people must be able to see through him; he suffered, as he obeyed this persistent compulsion, as though he were in the grip of some unknown disease of the nervous system, and he was ashamed, as though he were conscious of some mysterious aberration.

What happened while he was reading the records was no less singular. His memory had retained only the rough outline of the events, and the attitude which he had taken towards them at the time. All the details were blotted out; the interaction of human destinies seemed at first almost incomprehensible; the development and outbreak of human passions appeared as though viewed through an inverted opera-glass. These people seemed like so many corpses; their motives, actions, justifications, assertions, accusations, explanations, excuses and observations had something putrescent about them, something disgustingly stale, formless and vulgar. Yes, it was all hopelessly vulgar; the evidence of the servants, lamp-lighters, gunsmiths, policemen, railway-porters, hotel-porters, flower-sellers, boarding-house keepers, hairdressers and cab-drivers, and even that of the doctors, professors, professors' wives, students, tradespeople, manufacturers, baronesses and countesses. There was an army of witnesses, a flood of hearsay evidence, of rumours, of cross-examinations, depositions, pleas, investigations, documents and *corpora delicti*; all sorts of nonsense, all sorts of human effort. Every form of human suffering, of human baseness and human

weakness was preserved in this mountain of paper; drained of its blood, of the colour of life. To examine it was a business more unproductive than that of the anatomist who catalogues a collection of specimens preserved in alcohol. But Herr von Andergast had experience of this work. He had known beforehand that to penetrate these judicial catacombs would not be a pleasurable undertaking, and would subject his patience to a severe test. But to be patient was his vocation, and enjoyment of any sort of pleasure did not enter into his scheme of life. He began by separating what was essential from what was unimportant, by recovering the chief characters from chaos. There had always been a great deal of dissatisfaction over the verdict. It was not only that the habitual rebels had objected to it; it was not only that the muddle-headed enemies of law and order had protested, and had dared to speak of an appalling miscarriage of justice, or had at least expressed their doubts as to the conduct of the case, and the guilt of the prisoner; but even the better elements of society had been critical of the verdict. Even of recent years there had been those who insisted that a revision of the trial was desirable. But there was not the slightest pretext for such revision, either technical or substantial; Herr von Andergast had refused to sponsor the last of these petitions six years ago; he remembered it distinctly. The more absorbed he became in the study of the case, the clearer his recollection of it grew, as though the cobwebs had been swept from his brain, as well as from the dirty covers of the records. But this did not happen all at once; it was a slow and gradual process; and then, late one night, the face and figure of Leonhart Maurizius quite unexpectedly became actual to him.

He had closed the records, and was walking up and down the room, smoking a cigarette. He looked tired, and there were dark shadows round his eyes. But the tired mind, just because it has divested itself of its purpose, often produces without effort the thing which the most purposeful absorption would have failed to evoke. Suddenly he saw the young man before him as he had stood at the bar of justice, eighteen years ago.

A handsome fellow, undoubtedly; he carried himself well, and was fashionably dressed; and when he sat with his legs crossed one could see his grey silk socks above his immaculate shoes. It was only just beginning to be the fashion for men to wear silk socks. His wavy chestnut-brown hair was carefully parted; his face was open, almost a little too refined, and effeminately sensitive; the hands were slender and unpleasantly small; his whole appearance was something between a man of the world of artistic tendencies and a spoiled, headstrong, selfish Don Juan. The stereotyped smile never left his well-cut, sensual lips. (Herr von Andergast remembered the repugnance which the smiling, sensual mouth had always evoked in him. Why? It was mysterious, ambiguous, and it concealed unfathomable things; perhaps that was why.) That smile was contradicted by the fine brown eyes, whose beauty was marred by a constant blinking; in them he read a resolute defiance, and a melancholy that rose from unfathomable depths. There he stood; and five minutes earlier Herr von Andergast could not have said what he had looked like, how he had carried himself, how he had behaved; and now here was the man down to the very crease in his trousers, and the minute exactness of the picture almost frightened him. He wanted to blot it out; he averted his eyes as though from something obscene; but the apparition was persistent; it seemed as though his will alone had no power to banish it, as though it could be exercised only by another image of still greater actuality. And this second image appeared. It was that of Etzel.

During all the phases of his preoccupation with the Maurizius records, the image of Etzel kept on emerging from this turbid and confused mass of evidence (it was like a frozen swamp that was slowly thawing), shedding an increasing light over it, and inexorably holding his mind to its task. How this came about it is hard to explain in the case of a man who was not in the least given to hallucinations, whose susceptibility to presentiments was nil, and who had as little interest in metaphysics as (let us say) an efficient rotary press. There is no doubt that

Etzel's flight, and his pondering over his absence, and its motive, had influenced Herr von Andergast when he had, reluctantly, with the feeling that he was wasting his time, ordered the Maurizius records to be brought forth from the oblivion of the record office. What had concerned him chiefly hitherto was his wounded vanity, whether in the upper regions of his consciousness it called itself dignity, authority, paternal responsibility, social position, or public opinion, or, in some secret recess of his soul, the sense of having been cast aside, a consciousness of shattered hopes, of failing energy. Even though he was careful to avoid giving way to these feelings, and flatly denied them to save his own pride, he nevertheless suffered from them, as though from some physical disability which one dares not attempt to treat for fear of discovering some more deeply seated malady. Yet it was precisely these feelings that tormented him when he tried to direct his thoughts to the external circumstances. A boy of sixteen at the mercy of a world which he did not know! How could he protect himself from the daily vicissitudes, from the harsh exactions, from the mass of filth with which he would be confronted, from the crimes which might be perpetrated against him, or which he might be induced to commit? He was gambling with his future, his name, his honour, his health, and lastly, even with his life. One brings up a child with every care, prepares him for the position in life which will be his, takes the most carefully considered measures to protect him from the general demoralization, and suddenly he strikes at the hand which is leading him, and the next thing is that the police are looking for him, and he is wandering about the world branded as an adventurous runaway. Incredibly bad, from every point of view! "I have done my duty, first and last," Herr von Andergast told himself; and the thought of how badly he had been used brought a smile of bitter contempt to his lips. "I advised him honestly; he was properly cared for; he had every attention and consideration, and all the liberty which was due to him. What had he to complain of? In every serious difficulty he could confidently come to me. He was in decency bound to do

so. Should I have reproached him with his immaturity, should I have played the tyrant? Have I not rather wasted too much care and too much conscientiousness on a bad egg? It may well be that he has inherited some moral taint from his mother. I could not, in spite of all my care, eradicate the poison entirely; nature was too strong for me."

During this exchange of accusation and self-justification, of searching retrospection and dismal anticipation, his spirits sank lower and lower. If he had had a friend (supposing that a man like himself had been capable of friendship; but he was as incapable of it as a eunuch of procreation) he would have gone to him, would have tried to express what was in his mind, and perhaps would have found relief. But he had no one to whom he could go. No such person existed. He was as much alone among the half-million people of the city as he would have been in a boat in mid-ocean. He was only now beginning to grasp this fact. If ever he found a way which freed him from himself for awhile (freed him insufficiently, because he never could get really free from himself) it led him (rarely, and only in the night) in quite another direction.

CHAPTER VI

I

NIGHT after night he would sit until late over the records, which were so dusty that one could absolutely taste the dust, copying, noting, comparing and examining. It was true pick and shovel work; and although he rebelled against it with an insuperable aversion, it drew him deeper and deeper into its toils. What he was doing was not demanded of him; he refused to formulate any purpose to himself; at the same time he persisted in the task, and became an enigma to himself. He had perforce to find a pretext which should make this inexplicable situation in some degree plausible, and he persuaded himself into admiring the masterly achievement which the case represented, once one had worked one's way through the sterile desert of words and the rubble of facts. The separate details were welded together with iron logic, to form the complete structure which in the end was crowned by the verdict. Here were pearls of juridical art; the lapse of years permitted one for the first time to perceive the imposing structure, to appreciate the firmness of the foundation and the refined dynamics of its internal mechanism. The specialist took an æsthetic delight in it, and his own performance, it seemed to him now, was informed with an energy which, if he judged himself honestly, he would not be able to call forth to-day. Often we look back on the achievements of our youth, on which we lavished all our passion, all our powers of invention, with a sort of tragic envy.

2

Undeniably, however, there was one flaw in the case: the man had not confessed. At no stage of the proceedings, neither at the preliminary examination, nor during the trial, nor subsequently in prison, had Maurizius confessed to the deed. On the contrary, he had answered every question as to his guilt with the same harsh, obstinate denial. He had been equally harsh and obstinate in his silence when he was asked who, if he was innocent, had

committed the crime. This, of course, could not affect the verdict; the chain of evidence had been too strong; there was no possibility of escape. The most gifted counsel could not have broken down this evidence; much less the mediocre Dr. Volland—long since dead—whom Maurizius had chosen to represent him. Herr von Andergast still remembered the man quite clearly: a dry, pettifogging provincial with a walrus moustache and black-rimmed pince-nez which always sat askew on his bony nose. He was by no means convinced of the innocence of his client; he relied on the psychiatric experts, and took refuge in technical objections. The prisoner could not have had a weaker champion. Nor did Maurizius pay much attention to him; he treated his interruptions and questions with impatience and contempt, and once he even ordered him to be silent in open court. He could easily have obtained a better counsel. Why had he not done so? Among the documents there was a letter from old Maurizius to the court, to the effect that it was Anna Jahn who had urged Leonhart to employ Dr. Volland; he was the only lawyer in whom she had any confidence; he had always given her father satisfaction; he was honest and dependable. No attention had been paid to the letter at the time; they had not looked into the matter; after all, it was not the duty of the court to concern itself with the capacity of the counsel for the defence; but to-day, in the solitude of his study, a certain ambiguity seemed to surround the trifling incident. It seemed, presently, like a tiny hole in a monstrous tun, through which a long-cherished and well-matured liquor is trickling; yet one has no reason to fear that the hole will ever grow larger. At first it all seemed absolutely water-tight. Herr von Andergast had no doubts, no uneasiness. He put out the lamp on his desk, and stood for a while in the darkness, uncertain whether to go to his bedroom or to Etzel's study. He did not dare to decide on the latter. He felt as though he were returning from the scene of the trial, along a dark and narrow path, back into the present. It cost him an effort to remember where he was. For these events were, after all, eighteen years behind him. He considered those

eighteen years thoughtfully. They embraced the most significant years of his life; a countless number of days. One just like another, one following upon another. Eighteen years of a man's life, that had passed with nothing to show for them. Externally, yes; his profession, his career, his position; but what had he to show for them? Strictly speaking, it was an endless time. There is a kind of boredom that steals upon middle-aged men of the middle classes which is as destructive as the voracious tropical ant; the object on which it preys remains externally intact, but the interior is only a mildewed wreck. A shock, a blow, and the timbers, and indeed the whole building, will collapse in a formless heap.

And yet in this endless period there was something which might have destroyed its sterile monotony, had he paid any attention to it. That something had disappeared. He had been disregarded, and now he was gone. During all those countless days he had grown up beside him, and yet if he looked into the past for him, he did not know much more about him than the house-steward, the hall-porter, or the postman might have known. Was he really the same comical little fellow (it was infinitely long ago, while Sophia was still in the house—and his mind shied away from the thought) who used to run up and down the nursery with inarticulate cries of delight? The picture emerged, iridescent, as though from stagnant water. What a marvellous automaton was the brain! Why did it produce just this one picture among the thousands that were possible? The boy was not more than three years old. He was naked; it was just before his evening bath; he was running, with shrieks of delight, after his blue rubber ball. How rosy his skin was; how awkwardly the tiny feet moved along the floor, pointing straight before him, like those of a little bear! What an ineffable radiance in his eyes, as though this knee-high little creature were drunk with the joy of life! "Play with me! daddy, I'll find you. Why don't you want to? Are you going away again already? Do stay! I'll tell you what—you are the big puff-puff and I am the guard!" And at once he began to whistle and puff, shouting: "Take

your seats, please!"—and then transformed himself, frantically and whole-heartedly, into the thing he was impersonating: locomotive, cars, passengers, all in one. But the father cast only a distracted glance at the miniature magic world at his feet; he closed the door behind him, and betook himself again to the region of serious affairs.

How the pictures and faces evoked by his preoccupation with the trial became confused with these scenes of Etzel's childhood! This confusion became more and more harassing. It was as though he had taken one of those opiates which paralyse the will and stimulate the mind to uncontrolled phantasies. Nevertheless, he was perfectly capable of logical reflection. Yet he constantly had the feeling that his thoughts were shattered against an invisible wall, behind which something incomprehensible was happening. One night he lay in bed, with his hands clasped beneath his head, staring up at the ceiling. To lie in bed, for a man like Herr von Andergast, seems a peculiarly senseless occupation. There are figures—for example, bronze and marble statues—which, with the best will in the world, one can imagine only as erect; in a horizontal position they would evoke ideas of disorder and destruction. An unpleasant physical sensation crept over him; he was conscious of his toes and his back; all of a sudden he felt unpleasantly circumscribed, and he thought: "There's something wrong about the trial, but what is it? Somewhere the structure is defective—but where?" He went over the whole course of the affair. He began at the beginning. Suddenly the marriage of Leonhart and Elli Maurizius became absolutely vivid and plain and present to him. This was new, and in some way perturbing. One had always taken the view that a too vivid comprehension would obscure one's professional judgment. Any sort of imaginative activity was taboo, and the least tendency in this direction in another person aroused his distrust. Never in his whole practice had he seemed to *see* persons and things. Did this semi-narcotized condition explain why he was compelled to *see* the past life of his child, instead of merely *knowing* it, as heretofore? Was there, in this case as in that, at

the back of the known reality, another reality, more mysterious and at the same time more real? In any case, it was not uninteresting to follow the course of the events in this unusual way. As he lay there motionless, gazing at the ceiling of his bedroom, they passed before his eyes like the film of a cinema.

3

Elli Hensolt had not readily consented to become the wife of young Maurizius. She had refused him three times before she finally consented. She had said: I am a middle-aged woman; to-morrow I shall be old; you are a boy, and will remain young for another twenty years; what would be the end of it? What was her charm for him? Was it just this maturity? Was it her tranquillity? Her well-known strength of character, which was evident in all her actions? Had he had enough of ephemeral adventures? Did he long for guidance rather than seduction, for order rather than fitful passions? Was he, at four-and-twenty, already longing for a quiet middle-class home? Besides all this the fact that Elli Hensolt was a wealthy widow certainly played some part in the matter. He had, however, as he discovered subsequently, greatly over-estimated her fortune. He had believed that she possessed at least two hundred thousand marks, but her late husband had left her only half his fortune; the other half had gone to a charitable institution. The whole estate had not amounted to more than a hundred and sixty thousand marks. This Leonhart discovered only a few days before the wedding. Whether he was disappointed, or showed his disappointment, it was impossible to say; in any case he could not withdraw. Moreover, Elli was not a woman to be taken or left according to one's whim. She had her dignity; she was still handsome, and if one saw her in the street or in her drawing-room one would take her for thirty at the most. She knew how to put her clothes on; she had excellent manners, and although she was not beautiful, she had charm, and one could well understand that a young man like Leonhart Maurizius would not be indifferent to her.

What he needed and sought in her was clear from the beginning. He had reached the end of his tether. He was weary of too hasty and too greedy enjoyment. He had grasped at every hand which was extended to him, and each had taken possession of him, and had dragged him, unresisting, off the beaten track. He had no foothold. He saw his own danger and looked about him for support. Men of his type fall helplessly if they are not seized at the decisive moment by one stronger than themselves. He had been over-stimulated by too much society; he was blasé with admiration, and uneasily aware of having aroused expectations which he feared he would no longer be able to fulfil. To put it baldly, he had to be rescued. Elli realized this; she took counsel with herself, weighing what she had to win or to lose, and resolved to save him. She had confidence in herself. The task before her, a task hardly formulated, would demand her whole life; she knew that. One thing she exacted as a condition: confidence. Without complete, unreserved, boundless confidence, she could not take the risk. She must know everything, in every situation, and under all circumstances; there must be no secrets, no mysteries, either past or present. She asked for confidence; then she could give confidence, complete, unreflecting, boundless. He regarded the demand as not only just, but natural; he himself could not conceive of any other relationship; it was exactly what he was longing for. He eagerly took the vow which was his moral stake in the marriage. He was convinced that he would never break it; she believed him because from that moment she doubted his heart no more than she doubted his honour. Her love was founded, as it were, on an act of creation. She had the feeling that she had created him for herself.

4

When she learned, from the anonymous letter, after a year and a half of marriage, in the midst of their untroubled life together, of Leonhardt's connection with the dancer Gertrud Körner, and heard of the existence of their child Hildegard, she believed the report to be a slander. She destroyed the letter,

and tried not to think any more about it. Soon, however, she realized from Leonhart's restlessness that all was not as it should be. Little by little he had confessed everything to her; his communicativeness in this regard had even amused her at times, there was so much boyish boastfulness about it. She knew of the chemist's daughter who had recklessly thrown herself at his head, and of whom he had tired after one summer; of the silk-manufacturer's wife at Krefeld, who had made scenes in the public street when she was jealous; of the little Viennese pianist, who had almost persuaded him to go to America with her. She knew of occasional liaisons of a less binding nature, the affairs of a single night, of women picked up in the streets; she was always learning something new, of another stolen heart, another disappointed candidate, another successful assault on matrimonial peace. But of a Gertrud Körner, not a word. Yet he was not given to secrecy; he had said often enough: Thank God, all that is past; all that muddle is over; it is only now that you know everything that I am really free of it all. How glad that had made her, how much more serious and manly it had made him seem; how much more legitimate her feeling for him appeared, and how much more secure her life beside him! She could not understand it; there was the name; the name could not be simply invented. Who would be so mean, or so envious, as to invent such a story? She could not put it out of her mind; she would have to speak of it; and one day, at table, with downcast eyes, she told him about the letter. For a while he did not answer; then he admitted the fact, and began by confessing that he had written the letter himself. He had written it on the typewriter.

He treated the matter as a jest; but her eyes, wide with astonishment, made him realize that she did not understand such jokes. Well then, he wanted her to be prepared before he told her the story. Why? Was he still a stupid boy masquerading as a professor, a schoolboy playing practical jokes? She had hoped he had got over that. But now, good God! what a relapse! To write an anonymous letter to one's own wife! Well, she

must forget it, must behave as though it had never happened; let him get on with the story.—He admitted that he had had a liaison with the dancer; he had spent the holidays with her at Mürren; he had been fond of her; perhaps she had meant a little more to him than his other sweethearts; he could hardly say for certain now; they had parted as friends; and then in the winter she had the child. He admitted that too. Not so frankly as on making his other confessions; he was embarrassed and evasive. She wanted to know why he had kept just this affair a secret, or at least had put off telling her about it. He replied, shyly, precisely because of the child. At first she did not understand him; then she grew white and still. She was a childless woman, condemned by her body to remain childless. That was unalterable. In a moment she had considered the perils of the situation. Her position as a woman and a wife required the alertest attention every moment of her life, the clearest presence of mind. In a marriage between a man of twenty-five and a woman of forty there rests on the shoulders of the woman not only the fulfilment of the most intimate demands, but also the most difficult task imaginable, that of pretending that what is contrary to her nature is the thing that she most wishes and desires. So, in a moment of despair, she conceived the idea of adopting the orphan, and she would have discussed the plan had she not been surprised by an unfortunate remark of Leonhart's, which was probably inspired only by his embarrassment. (This conversation was recorded in minute No. 14 of the preliminary examination, and also in a letter from Elli to her friend, Frau Professor von Geldern, which was also among the documents relating to the case; the plan for adopting the child appeared only in the second document, as may be imagined.) "Anna knows about it," said Leonhart; "I could not think of anything to do, except to confide in her." Elli stared at him. Suddenly the only impulse left her was one of hostility; her instinct was to defend herself against the child. She rose silently and left the room. How had it come about that he had confided in Anna before confiding in her? What had happened? What had been said? She must get to the

bottom of this. She felt that Leonhart had an affection for the child, an affection which he had not yet, perhaps, admitted even to himself, but which was for that reason all the more dangerous. Did Anna understand that too? Did she approve? Had she encouraged the feeling? Had she played the guardian angel? Without a doubt—and she did not need to wait for the evidence of this—it was Anna who had taken the child to England; Anna had undertaken to care for the child; Anna was in charge of the correspondence; Anna was watching over this treasure which had suddenly come into existence. What had induced her to do so? Had he appealed to her, as the only person who could help him in his need? Was she, Elli, of no use in this emergency? Had he been afraid of her objections, or had he only been anxious to spare her? Anna's face assumed a different expression in Elli's eyes. She had loved her sister. She had admired her beauty. She understood that it was a joy simply to look at her. Rarely indeed does it please God to create such a creature. She had faith in Anna's pride and chastity; she expected much of her natural gifts; and the girl knew enough of the world to adapt herself to whatever circumstances without losing her dignity. Elli, therefore, did not believe that her sister had been guilty of any indiscretion; in such a provincial town, where everyone, from the greengrocer to the colonel's lady, indulges in backstairs gossip, one was compromised if one merely smiled at a man in public, though all sorts of vice and wickedness were rampant behind the demurely-painted curtain. Anna would therefore be circumspect, even though she were fonder of her young brother-in-law than she should be, thought Elli; and she could well understand that she might be fond of him; what woman could remain indifferent to him? But this affair of the child Hildegard had created a bond between them, far stronger than any that could arise out of chance proximity or a casual flirtation (though Anna, for that matter, was anything but a flirt; but every woman has her wiles, and those who are not coquettes are all the more dangerous when it comes to a serious issue); and far more unassailable, since they could allege a sense

of duty, a friendship, which would wear an innocent appearance that would protect them from Elli's suspicions.

But Elli did not dare to be suspicious. For her own sake she did not dare. Matters must not be allowed to go so far as to make her doubt, or even regard it as possible to doubt, on the first accidental pretext, the most sacred assurances that he had ever given her. For the truth was that she was now in love with him. Up to her thirty-ninth year she had not learned what love really was. She had never known that joy of exclusive possession which had made her previously joyless life a miracle and a daily renewal. Was it not natural that she should already tremble at what her eyes did not yet perceive, at something that her mind refused to admit, even as a haunting nightmare? None the less, fear was this woman's teacher, and it permeated every virtue that she displayed in her married life. For this was a marriage with a man who was at the beginning of things while she was at the end; a spoiled child of fortune, to whom everything had been given for which others contrive and struggle; a man who had been received with kindness, indulgence, and promotion while others, his contemporaries and colleagues, found themselves knocking at closed doors. Her husband was a man who had only to take where others begged in vain; only to speak to find people in agreement with him; only to work in order to receive recognition; only to beckon, and he had a following. Thus every hour was an ordeal, and every moment they spent together made its peculiar demands on her. He, of course, must not dream of this; everything must appear easy; he must not notice when she was tired; if she had a headache, if her nerves threatened to betray her, the fact must be heroically concealed; after all, she had time to nurse herself up and to rest when he was not present; in his company she was always fresh, gay and eager, discussing his plans and dispelling his moods of depression. He suffered from attacks of despondency, although hitherto fortune had favoured him in every way; like all persons who are inwardly unstable, he regarded himself as misunderstood. At such times she used the most subtle powers of persuasion, an inventive spiritual

tenderness, by which she restored him to a more tranquil relation to herself and the world. These conversations often lasted until well into the night, and when she had finally succeeded in making him laugh she knew that she had prevailed. Everything was permitted to her, except that she must not bore him; and as a matter of fact she entertained Leonhart so well that during the first eighteen months of their marriage he stayed at home, alone with her, night after night. To the surprise of his friends he appeared neither at the club nor at any other social gatherings, nor did Elli express the slightest desire to go to the theatre or to visit her acquaintances. Three or four times in the course of the winter they invited a few people to the house, and now and again they accepted a few invitations; but that was all. For a time it looked as though "that genius Maurizius", as his friends called him, or "that unscrupulous romanticist", as he was often called by the scoffers and doubters, was developing under Elli's influence into a more definite and clear-cut personality.

5

The documents of the case proved clearly enough that the trouble had begun soon after the conversation about the child Hildegard. At this time Anna Jahn was already visiting her sister's house almost every day. It was a comfortable house, tastefully furnished and well run, a pleasant villa in the garden suburb, a house where one felt at ease. Anna was living in a crowded *pension*; she complained of the bad food and the tiresome company. Groups of uninteresting students, elderly females who gossiped over all the private affairs of the town, old bachelors who bombarded her with insipid flattery: it was all getting on her nerves, it was making her ill. Moreover, she was uncertain as to the choice of her future occupation; her financial situation was distressing; during the last few months she had been living on the small capital which she had inherited. She was hesitating between learning a handicraft and preparing for the State examination in French and English. She asked her sister and brother-in-law to advise her; both tried to help her, but she could not make up her mind.

She felt no inclination for anything; she felt that she was unfitted to support herself; she had no particular talents; she could not subordinate herself; she could not serve. She could not give up what people in those days called "life", though they were only dawdling on the outskirts of life. Leonhart, who had at first been rather unsympathetic, understood her hesitation and confirmed her in it. In her contempt for a paid profession he saw an aristocratic trait with which he fully sympathized. Elli, on the other hand, warned her against the life of a parasite, a creature of luxury, which, unless one had adequate means, involved a loss of self-respect, a far more essential lowering of oneself than that of the working-woman. However, Anna was not the sort of girl to end up in a convent; in all probability she would soon find a husband who would offer her the kind of life she wanted. Anna shrugged her shoulders. Her beautiful face grew curiously dark and sullen. In the diary which Elli kept at that time this fact was expressly noted as worthy of remark. After this Anna spoke scornfully to Leonhart, saying that her sister was afraid that she would ask her for money. But he might safely reassure his wife; Anna would rather cut off her hand than accept anything from Elli; a niggardly man was detestable enough, but an avaricious woman was like a miscarriage of nature. The poisonous word had its effect. He could not refrain from making an irritable comment to Elli. One of his best qualities was his generosity; he could not bear to see people anxiously clinging to their purse-strings. Elli quickly repudiated the assumption that she wished to forestall her sister's possible requests for money. Wasn't it you, she said, who were always hardest on Anna's aristocratic inclinations, and who actually made fun of her, because her appearance was so little in harmony with her social position? Wasn't it you who thought her ambitions exaggerated? This was true. Leonhart was silent. As a matter of fact, he had never lost an opportunity of making fun of "Miss Stony-Broke", who put on the airs of a princess, and for whom no society was good enough. As things developed later, it was fair to assume that he wanted to revenge himself on Anna for her haughty, or at

least indifferent, attitude toward himself. She was at first convinced that he had married Elli only because of her money, that he had from the outset speculated on the fortune of the dead manufacturer. Why should she have had any particular respect for a young man who had so shamelessly thrust his neck into the gilded yoke of an old woman?

Shortly after he had appealed to her in connection with the child Hildegard they had had a curious conversation. (It seemed that his decision to appeal to her womanly sympathies, and to make her his confidante, had been quite unexpected and spontaneous; there had been no preliminaries, and he had not known whether she would listen to him, or whether she would send him away at the first mention of the subject. Perhaps he had wished to take her by surprise, having long been secretly irritated by her coldness, and was quite unconscious of what he was risking. He was simply a creature of impulse, and he allowed his impulses to guide him.) Then, at their second or third conversation on the subject of the little Hildegard, the question of his marriage was touched upon. He repudiated bitterly the ugly suspicion to which he had forced her to confess. In his justification of his marriage there was a tone of veracity which could not be ignored. How would a man defend himself against such a reproach? He would point to the selfless friendship which the woman had bestowed on him; he would say: only a mature woman, a woman of set character, whose mind was no longer subject to cheap delusions, could so understand a man, and especially a man who had not yet found himself. He would praise the peace of mind which the relationship had brought him, the sense of confidence, like that of a captain of a crippled vessel when he knows that there is a sure hand on the wheel. But one must go deeper; these were mere commonplaces; they said nothing of Elli's strong personality, of her sensitive heart, her incorruptible judgment of men and women, her self-sacrifice, her spiritual wealth. Leonhart spoke with eager enthusiasm; Anna Jahn heard him with bowed head. So much superiority in another woman is almost a reproach to her who hears that

woman praised, especially if the woman be one's own sister. Leonhart explained what he meant by a crippled vessel (it was characteristic of him that he should seize this opportunity of speaking of his imperilled character, though he displayed it, for the most part, in a very favourable light, suggesting that his was an enigmatical nature). Before he met Elli he was a plaything in the hands of the first comer; he might really have given up at any moment, deluded by his erroneous ideas, disheartened to the point of despair; it was by pure chance that this did not happen; it was only his almost arrogant faith in his lucky star that had kept him from sinking. If hitherto he had not yet known a really great love, and if his marriage to Elli implied a conscious renunciation in this respect, he had nevertheless gained something else; something nobler perhaps, at all events more enduring. Anna could not refrain from an ironical smile. What did it mean not to have known love (a "great love", as though there were a great love and a small)? Apart from the fact that this was the flowery language of a schoolboy, it looked like a trap, though it was not very cleverly concealed. This was the way to entrap yearning young fools, whose desire was nothing more than a nibbling curiosity, to which one casts resignation as a bait. Still, the seeming truth of an apparently painful confession, whose kernel is a mere palatable lie, is a recipe which seldom fails.

Anna did not easily fall into the trap. She saw her brother-in-law with somewhat different eyes, but she did not trust him unduly. He was so eloquent, he talked so cleverly, and he would persist in trying to divest her of a prejudice long after her conversion was effected. She believed now that he had not married Elli from mercenary motives; she was not so stupid that she could not abandon a superficial judgment when she had learned better. Why, then, these continued discussions, this effort to obtain a hold over her; why all these questions, these lectures? In the end she did as he wished and went to Switzerland with a nurse, fetched the child, and took it to her friend Pauline Caspot. This Mrs. Caspot was the daughter of a Düsseldorf physician;

she had married an English business man, who died shortly after the wedding, leaving her almost destitute; whereupon she had opened a home for unemployed governesses in Hertfordshire, a few miles north of London; and there she made quite a decent living. Anna wrote to her regularly about Hildegard, gave careful instructions as to her education (the lonely woman had taken an eager interest in the deserted child), and each month she sent the money for her maintenance which Leonhart gave her for this purpose. All this, of course, involved a good deal of planning and co-operation, especially as Elli's flat refusal to have anything to do with the matter made it in some degree Anna's duty to help Leonhart, who was very inexpert in practical affairs. But he was never tired of discussing the matter; once every week she must go to town with him to buy a present, a little dress, or some toy or other, for the child. He begged her to get him some photographs of Hildegard; he wanted to have Hildegard's portrait painted by an English artist; he implored Anna never to relax her interest in the child, saying that she was her real mother, and other things of the sort. It was hard to refuse him anything; his graciousness was so captivating; they were getting to know one another better; their relations were gradually and naturally becoming more informal. Elli meanwhile behaved like one who tries to look agreeable with a rope round her neck. Where are you going, or where have you been? she would ask smilingly. Anna felt that she was being spied on. She turned obstinate; a sarcastic remark, a look of boredom was enough, and Leonhart would irritably attack his wife. Are we in a kindergarten, he would ask; are we forbidden to speak to one another? Elli would smile apologetically. She could no longer find the right thing to say. It was as though a veil had been drawn between her and Leonhart; they could no longer be innocently together; in every conversation there was some unkindness, some hidden trap; the loneliness and division which had come upon them was growing unendurable; if Elli disagreed with anything that he said, Leonhart would at once fall silent, withdrawing into a reserve that lasted for hours. And if at such times she looked into his face she

divined his thoughts, and became more and more afraid. One day he asked her to advance him some money. He was financially embarrassed; Anna's trips to England, with the maintenance of the child, had absorbed considerable sums; he was short of ready money; he needed six hundred marks. She gave him a cheque on her bank. He looked at it; the cheque was for four hundred marks. "I asked you for six hundred," he remarked coldly. She replied that no more interest was due. "Interest? Do you want to limit me to a fixed amount—are you treating me like a schoolboy who has overrun his monthly allowance?"

"I know what I'm doing," she replied, with averted eyes, her fingers working nervously; "if we begin to use up our capital we shall be ruined in ten years' time." He laughed in her face. "In ten years I trust I shall have got so far that I shall be able to dispense with your generosity; or do you want to play the guardian to me all my life?" Elli winced; a dumb, fierce expression, which he had never seen before, came over her face. Laying her hand on his shoulder, she said: "You wished for this guardianship yourself; it protects you from yourself. If necessary I shall protect you from yourself even against your will." He stared at her and was silent. She had never spoken so before. This was a threatening sort of programme. He suddenly realized what he must expect.

He now began to spend his evenings away from home. She neither protested nor complained. She was careful to avoid an open rupture. She saw that the ground on which she trod was undermined, and she trembled at each successive step. She did not ask him whom he was going to see, nor where he had been when he came home late, but his complicated explanations and obviously false accounts of meetings, conferences, and professional duties—which, he alleged, he found extremely exacting—filled her with dread and anxiety. Once she caught him in an open lie. The people on whom he pretended that he had called had left the town the day before; he had overlooked the fact that she might easily hear of their departure. He did not tell her that he went to the club almost every day to play poker; but she was

aware of the fact. He had relapsed again, as before his marriage, into immoderate drinking and smoking, and made no pretence of regular work. Not until Waremmé's overwhelming influence took hold of him did he begin to talk (but it was only talk, and stopped short of achievement) of any disciplined activity; but this talk did not prevent his wasting his nights in the company of this fateful man, drinking, gambling and debating.

6

In the diary already referred to Elli frequently mentioned Waremmé; sometimes casually, sometimes at considerable length; and she spoke of him also in a letter to Frau von Geldern. She, of course, was as little able to fathom him as the majority of the people who came into contact with him. Everything that was said about him was just as correct as the precise opposite would have been. No one could understand him. For a time the whole town was talking of him; and especially in the beginning, in the winter of 1904 and 1905, when it was as though a pike had fallen into a tank of goldfish. A gambler, a social lion, a hero among the ladies—it is a familiar and a not very exciting type; but he was also a poet, a philosopher, a philologist, and a politician; and of what a calibre! Here was no conventional dilettante, no mnemonic acrobat, but a man of creative mind; a deuce of a fellow, a universal genius. He was working at a new translation of the whole of Plato; it was said to be magnificent; now and again he would read some of the best passages to his friends. He gave private lectures on Hegel and the Hegelian philosophy, which was just beginning to come into vogue again. He published a book of *German Odes*, rather reminiscent of Hölderlin, and contributed an article to an historical review in which he showed that the Parsifal legend was not of purely French origin, but rather had its roots in the old Germanic mythology. It was said that he was *persona grata* in the palace of the Bishop of Breslau, who had recommended him warmly to exalted clerical circles in the Rhineland. A convinced Catholic, he attended Mass, but was divorced from his wife. He had no fortune, and no regular in-

come, but he refused to accept any sort of tutorship or salaried position. Was this because he wanted to remain independent (and when he asserted that it was so everyone believed him implicitly), or was he receiving money from some obscure source? This, too, one could readily believe. His chief subject was political philosophy. With all the passion that was in him he proclaimed Germany's mission in the world, declaring that Germany would be stifled in her state of confinement, would perish through the destructive elements within the State, unless she secured breathing-space by means of a war. This war was to him a matter of religious faith; it was a holy war, and he regarded himself as its Peter of Amiens. Basing his argument on historical tradition, which was interrupted, towards the close of the Middle Ages (a blessed period!) by the Latin-Celtic inundation, he erected, in his imagination, a Germano-Roman empire extending from Sicily to Livonia, and from Rotterdam to the Bosphorus. Everything must be made to serve this idea: art and poetry, Gothic and Baroque, the Renaissance and antiquity, Christ and the Fathers of the Church. Either this ideal had made a fanatic of the man (if he was one) or fanaticism (if that was his trouble), being an ingredient of his character, promoted the ideal because the time for it was ripe. He had no lack of hangers-on; he was surrounded by a flock of docile admirers, though never enough to appease his hungry vanity. And there may have been something in the assumption of certain cool-headed observers, that he had behind him men of greater influence than chauvinistic professors, half-pay generals, and a mob of excitable students; that these people knew very well what they wanted; that the imperial splendours of the Middle Ages meant precisely nothing to them, except in so far as they could make the intoxicating dream serve their ends. An intellectual Titan like this Waremme was doubtless extremely useful to them, whether or not he was, at the bottom of his heart, absolutely convinced of what he preached. This was why people were so indulgent in respect of his affairs with women, his constant money troubles, his personal unreliability, and the uncertainty as to his origin, concerning

which he was constantly telling different stories, like a man who lies unskilfully because he lies too often.

It turned out that he was a friend of Anna Jahn's, or at least that he was acquainted with her. He had met her a year earlier in Cologne, and had coached her for the rôle of a Pierrot in an amateur theatrical performance during the carnival; to such good effect that her performance had received unqualified applause. This was the story; how much of it was true one could hardly tell; Anna herself had never discussed it, for she never spoke of her experiences. It was, however, a singular fact that since then she had never been to the theatre and abhorred everything connected with it. She said nothing of Waremmé either; at all events, she never mentioned him to Elli, and she certainly did not introduce him to Leonhart. It seemed that Waremmé must have taken the initiative in this matter, as though he had scented the young man from afar as a likely victim. Before long the two were inseparable; in the morning Leonhart went to Waremmé's house; in the afternoon he rode with him; Anna frequently joined them, and the three made quite a sensation in the streets of the town; finally Leonhart introduced Waremmé into his home. Some relic of intuition made him hesitate a long time before doing so, and Waremmé's encounter with Elli was distinctly difficult. Her dislike of the man was elemental. Merely to look at him made her feel ill; the sallow face, with the lower jaw of a negro boxer, the watery-blue eyes with their bold glitter, the fat neck, the fat hands covered with rings—everything about him was indescribably hateful to her; the disdainful and exaggerated politeness, which at once reminded her that a man was a man, and a woman a woman, and the supreme frivolity of his conversation. It was true that, compared with him, Leonhart was like a lackey in a prince's anteroom, but that was no reason why she should see him humiliated. Human rank is not a human creation: it comes from God; all that mattered to her was what Leonhart did and accomplished, being what he was. She implored him to drop the man. He behaved as though she had asked a thing incompatible with his

honour. "You don't seem to have any idea who Gregor Waremme is." Oh, yes, she had a very good idea; as the man came towards her her heart stopped beating; she had a feeling of inevitable disaster; but of this she was careful to say nothing. "Besides," he continued, "Waremme is the only person who really takes an interest in Anna." What could she reply? She stood with reeling brain. It had been agreed that he should go with her to tea at Councillor Eichhorn's; he had promised to call for her. He did not appear. She went home; the clock struck nine, ten, eleven; she went up to bed. Next morning he excused himself; no, he had not gone; Waremme had read him an article which he had just completed. Two hours later the councillor's wife rang her up. "Why didn't you come, Elli? It was a delightful evening; we danced, and the handsomest couple here were undoubtedly Dr. Maurizius and Anna." Elli stammered helplessly into the telephone; she felt her very blood turning to gall. She was already so unimportant to him that he did not even trouble to devise a lie that would hold water. She did not dare call him to account; matters had gone too far, like a fire that mocks at a jet of water; with tied hands, with terrified staring eyes, she saw him sinking deeper and deeper; but she could scarcely believe that all was over; she still hoped and waited, thinking that it might be only a temporary cloud; he could not possibly have forgotten all the promises he had made her, promises on which she had built up her life. But while she was still deceiving herself thus, the demoniacal forces were already gathering within her, the forces with which she fought for him and for her possession of him, and so destroyed both him and herself.

7

One afternoon at dusk, returning from an errand in the town, Elli opened the door of the living-room; Leonhart and Anna, startled, moved hastily away from one another, staring disconcertedly at Elli in the doorway. Anna took a few steps to the window, rearranged her disordered hair, which was straggling over her forehead and cheeks, and hid her flaming face; Leonhart

remained as though rooted to the sofa, and turned to Elli with a gesture of entreaty. Not a word was uttered. When Anna had collected herself a little, she seized her hat and coat, and rushed to the door, casting at Leonhart, as she hurried past him, a glance of such withering contempt that he, white as a sheet, now appealed to Anna with the same gesture of entreaty which he had just made to his wife. But her eyes merely blazed at him scornfully, as though it were a defilement to be in the same room with him, as though for that reason she was leaving it as quickly as possible. "Let me pass!" she cried to her sister, imperiously; Elli stepped silently aside, and Anna disappeared. Her light quick steps were still audible when Leonhart went up to his wife and said imploringly: "I swear by God, Elli, she is innocent." Since Elli was still silent, for the whole room was whirling dizzily round her, he sank down on his knees, and clasped her knees, repeating: "Believe me, Elli, you have nothing to reproach her for; she is as pure as the daylight." Elli felt that his behaviour was theatrical; nevertheless, there was honesty and truth in his voice and bearing. What could distress Elli more than precisely this?

There were two accounts of this incident, which were essentially in agreement; one was Leonhart's own, and the other that of the maid Frieda, who had been eavesdropping. His own account of the situation of the three persons concerned was apparently authentic. What happened was approximately this: Leonhart, the sensually infatuated weakling, was bewitched by his beautiful sister-in-law, and thought only of how he might seduce her, and she, completely dependent, uncertain as to her future, defended herself as best she could against his passionate pursuit of her, doing her utmost to bring him to his senses; but being, after all, only an inexperienced girl of nineteen, she was fascinated by the man's undeniable charm, so that in spite of her reserve she was bound to appear in an ambiguous light to her sister. She did not wish to deceive Elli, even though she cared for Leonhart; she could not estrange the husband and wife; even if he were to get a divorce from Elli, she would not be able to bear the thought

that she had ruined her sister's life. And had he any intention of leaving Elli? Absolutely none. To begin with, he was, like herself, dependent on Elli, but in a far greater degree; he was too profoundly addicted to the small luxurious pleasures of life to be able to make up his mind to return to the insecure limitations of a bachelor existence, dependent on the whims of a despotic father. Moreover, to do so would jeopardize his position in society, which he valued very highly, as well as his career as a scholar and a man of letters. In the circles into which he had ingratiated himself any secret aberration might be pardoned, but never a public scandal. He saw himself forced to shifts and compromises, for he was not man enough to give up the one thing or the other. Renunciation calls for lucid realization; but such half-baked characters are seldom clearly conscious of their position or of their secret impulses; they prefer to flounder in uncertainty. And here one began to perceive the enigma in this otherwise uninteresting triangle.

In spite of his increasing and irrepressible passion for Anna, a feeling which hardly left room within him for any other, and which in the end was no longer concealed from the world, he continued to live with Elli as his wife. Perhaps one can understand this in him. Perhaps he sought oblivion in her arms; but it is hard to believe that she could give him this, since she, in her agony, could not see her own way clearly. Perhaps he was trying to deceive her as to his own condition; though, of course, we have first of all to presume that such a woman as Elli could be deceived in such a matter. It may be that she simply did not deny herself to him, hoping perhaps, perhaps believing that there was a magic in her blood which might win him back; and it may be that this was so, that it was not merely her woman's pity which was dragging her down into an abyss that was like a glacier crevasse filled with volcanic fires—not merely the compassion of the maternal lover who gives to the last drop because all is demanded of her. That he should require this, that he should accept it, having so visibly and evidently only the adored image of the younger sister before his eyes—that what was horrible to

Elli should be for him a dream of happiness—this makes the thought of him almost repulsive. The voluptuary treads the darkest of all the world's paths.

And yet it seemed that he could not escape from her. She had some incomprehensible power over the man which held him fast. He probably could not explain this to himself. It was possible that it was something of which he had reason to be ashamed. Sometimes a woman—and she need not even be a remarkable woman—may see through a man in a way which ties him to her more surely than sensuality or interest. There are men whose sinews of action are paralysed if one divines their thoughts before they have converted them into action, because they are so organized that they can attain to external truth only by concealing their inner selves. If now the same woman, in addition to this intellectual gift, had a certain power over a man's senses, she would be doubly, trebly or ten times more dangerous, precisely in proportion to this power. This would create the most profound dependence that we know.

He had delivered himself over to her by his oath to confide in her. Like many men of weak character, he was morbidly sensitive about his honour; so sensitive, in fact, that he would uphold his integrity, if necessary, by the most shabby self-deception. He would obstinately deny having done wrong to the very last, even in the face of crushing evidence against him. The point was that he did not want to fall in her estimation. Her admiration and her delicate understanding of him had gradually uplifted him into an atmosphere of self-complacency, which was to him a vital necessity, so that he still had the gesture, the glance, and even the words of his earlier confidences, long after he had ceased to dare to make his confessions to her. It was as though a driving-pulley should continue to run without a driving-belt. He was afraid. He would rather have had her find him out gradually and indirectly, without his doing anything in the matter. In this way he won time. One can never tell what may happen from one day to the next. He was afraid of the change in her feeling for him, afraid of her knowledge, afraid of the inevitable decision;

and, above all, he was afraid of what he called her jealousy. The very thought of an explosion filled him with a longing to escape; her capacity for passion threatened his very foundations; to his sensitive nerves it seemed almost barbaric.

The word jealousy in this case has little meaning. Here there was a question rather of a hopeless disease, a cancer of the soul, for which there was no physician, no remedy, no relief, not even an interval of exhaustion. She listened eagerly to every rumour, and there was no lack of tale-bearers. Here and there Anna had been seen with him. On Sunday they were at the Arts Club for a couple of hours. The night before last he called for her at her *pension*, and they took a walk along the banks of the Rhine. He sent her a book from the university library; a letter was concealed in it. On Wednesday she went to his lecture, sat in the second row, and gazed at him all the time. One snowy night he walked up and down in front of her *pension*, from eleven to half-past twelve. Then, again, she was seen in the garden of the villa while Elli was in town; Leonhart went down to her, and they walked round the straw-covered flower-beds, in vehement conversation, she with bowed head, speaking only in a whisper, and he gesticulating with excitement, and now and again wringing his hands. Waremmé called for him at the club yesterday in a cab; behind the parish church Anna got in. The maid Frieda related with a grin that Fräulein Anna had rung up at half-past eight, and Frieda had said that her master and mistress were still asleep.

Elli could no longer rouse herself to any sort of activity. The house was in disorder; the meals were irregular, and the tradespeople had not been paid for weeks. She lay in bed all the morning, with her curtains drawn; when she finally got up she, who was once so neat and careful of her appearance, was now unkempt, with her hair in disorder, with an old shawl drawn over her shoulders, as though she were cold to the very bone. She would sit at the window, or in front of the stove; she would sit and stare into space. Her face was deeply lined; her skin was leaden grey; if she happened to look into the mirror she shuddered at her reflection. If Leonhart did not come into lunch she

would go to the telephone, call up his friends and acquaintances, and ask whether he was with them, whether they knew where he was; she would send Frieda to inquire of others who were not on the telephone, and to the club, and various of the restaurants. This, of course, he learned; people were laughing at him; Waremme made a jest about a bold prodigal tripping over the apron-strings. Angrily, he took her to task; she replied that she had been anxious; she had imagined that he was lying ill somewhere. Sometimes, in the evening, she could no longer bear to be alone; she would rush out of the house, hardly taking time to slip on a coat, and hurry into the town, wandering distractedly through the streets, staring at people outrageously; she would follow a young couple, thinking them to be Anna and Leonhart, causing the passers-by to shake their heads with disapproval. Then she would run home as though in maddened flight, and wait, and wait, and wait. At last he would come home, at midnight, or often much later; tired, silent, evasive. He did not dare to avoid her; her imperious demands that he should remain with her made a coward of him. Had she no sense left, thus to humiliate herself, begging for a glance, appealing for some little show of affection, asking that he should hold her hand for just a minute? How helpless she was, how utterly abandoned! Cowering before him, she sobbed upon the floor; and suddenly the thing that he had dreaded happened. She began to rage at him: "You have dragged me into the mire, into the dirt; where are your promises? What are you keeping from me? What do you mean to do?" And she cursed her sister, and threatened to kill herself; first the woman who had betrayed her, then him, then herself. "Don't imagine that you can treat me as you have treated the others; I am not the sort of woman who allows herself to be cast off; with me it is a question of everything, of life, of eternity; and you knew that!" And he, like a beaten cur, consoled and pacified her, denied everything, swore that he was innocent, feigned affection, friendship, pretended to be moved. He could not get free of her; he could not make an end of the scene; he wanted to get to bed and to sleep; all this was so distasteful, so repulsive

to him; he forced himself to bestow a lying caress on her in order—so he excused himself to himself—to keep her from raging anew, and she cried: “Kill me; then at least we shall have peace!”

Did it not seem as though this “Kill me!” had in some dark hour taken root in his soul?—as though she had read in his eyes the wish which was already in his mind before her desperate entreaty; and as though this was the origin of the frightful forebodings to which she was always a victim when her tired heart sought for a moment to take stock of itself?

Night after night the same scenes occurred, each time more futile, more embittered, more infernal! He shuddered at the sight of his house, at the steps, at the light in the window. Once, on the way home, he threw the key of the garden gate into the Rhine, and was then obliged to climb over the fence. He knew it all by heart; her words, gestures, tears and demonstrations, and finally her pitiful entreaty not to leave her alone, for they no longer slept together; and her restless wandering about the house when he had at last torn himself away. Then she would take veronal, and try to fall asleep, tormented by her ceaseless fears. Sometimes she would knock once more at his door, as though she wanted to assure herself that he was really there. Lights were often seen burning in the sitting-room until four o'clock in the morning, and one night Elli screamed so loudly that the policeman on the beat rang the door-bell to ask whether anything had happened.

8

One afternoon Elli went out, paid a visit to her dressmaker, had tea at a confectioner's, where she also drank two glasses of cognac, and then went to Anna's flat. Anna had moved a fortnight earlier; she had rented a fashionable little flat from the widow of a major. Where she got the means to do so had never been explained or discussed. It was true that some weeks earlier Gregor Waremmé had engaged her as his secretary; she worked with him three hours every morning; but the salary so earned

would suffice to pay for her shoes and stockings; moreover, this was not a permanent employment. Towards the end of the month there was to be a so-called "German Congress"; the most eminent patriots had been invited to take part in it. Waremme was the soul of the affair, which was to be representative in character. He was greatly occupied with the preparations, with the necessary correspondence, and with raising the funds required. He devoted himself to these matters all the more vigorously because another scandalous story had recently attached itself to his name; a homosexual affair in which some young nobles, members of a distinguished fraternity, were involved; and his patrons were doing their utmost to suppress it. (They were, however, only partially successful; a socialistic journal published a somewhat alarming article, for the time being without giving any names, and it was decided as a precautionary measure to postpone the congress until the autumn. Then, in consequence of events which had occurred in the meantime, the congress was abandoned altogether.)

The evening was drawing on; in the increasing darkness of the room Elli waited for her sister. She walked restlessly up and down, sometimes stopping to listen at the door; then she stood at the window, looked over the papers on the desk, and began to walk up and down again. Then she opened a drawer of the desk, and the first thing she noticed was a photograph of Leonhart which she had never before seen, and under which she read the words: "May 18, 1905, seven o'clock in the evening. Since this hour I know that I have an immortal soul. Leonhart." She stared at the picture. She burst out laughing. In one of her last letters to the friend who has frequently been mentioned, she wrote: "I felt as though where my breasts are I had two deep open wounds." Her whole body shook with laughter. Then Anna came in. "What are you doing there, Elli?" The hated, harsh, melancholy voice! Elli tore the portrait in four pieces and threw them at Anna's feet. "How much further do you intend to carry this revolting comedy?" she screamed into her sister's face; "either you or I, one of us must go, and if I must be the one,

you know where I shall go, and your troubles will be over, and you'll be able to congratulate yourself on having the conscience of a swineherd." Anna leaned against the wall, spreading out her arms as though to take hold of it and hold herself up; she turned deathly pale, and fell to the ground. Without paying any attention to her, leaving her lying there, convulsed as though with epilepsy, Elli made ready to go. But she had not yet reached the door when Leonhart and Waremme stood before her, both in evening-dress. They had come to fetch Anna; an acquaintance had invited them to dine, with some other friends, at the hotel. Waremme went over to Anna, bent over her, and, seeing the pieces of the torn photograph, he stood up, shaking his head, and turned to Leonhart with the words: "You see, my dear Maurizius, you should not have let matters go so far." At the same time he motioned to him to look after Anna; he himself, curiously enough, went up to Elli, who stood confronting her husband in trembling silence, offered her his arm, which she, still more oddly, accepted, and thus he led her through the hall, whence the major's widow, who had of course been listening, and had heard everything, fluttered off like a bat. A cab was waiting below; he stepped in after her, drove home with her, accompanied her to her room, and talked to her for perhaps a quarter of an hour. She had the feeling that a great physician, or a priest who knew the human heart, had taken charge of her case. Her antipathy had disappeared; she herself could not speak, but, still weeping, she surrendered herself to the charm of his presence. He was so gentle, so kind, so wise; he understood her whole wretchedness; how should it be, she thought, that such a man should exist, and that one should have thought that one ought to hate him? She silently approved of his advice that Leonhart should keep away from her for the next few days; he would put him up at his own place; nor was he to see Anna. The best thing would be for Anna to come here to her sister; he would strongly recommend this; it was important, if only to stop the evil gossip. He protested that Anna was guiltless, saying that before long he would bring her the most overwhelming evidence

of her innocence. What his plans were could not be misunderstood. Elli, in unconquerable excitement, seized his hand, trying to kiss it. "For heaven's sake!" he exclaimed, and pressed his lips to her forehead. That night Elli slept a dreamless sleep of thirteen hours. The great physician had helped her. Leonhart remained at Waremme's for a whole week. One morning, in the beginning of October, he strolled into the garden, cut some roses, and sent Frieda to her with a bunch of them. She was so moved with joy that she threw her arms round the girl and kissed her. "All may come right again," she wrote to her friend, in her incomprehensible delusion; "the bitterest part of the whole affair is that the last ten months have aged me ten years; I am to-day an old woman." Meanwhile, for Leonhart the situation had become terribly critical. Anna, in his own house, was more effectively separated from him than by a ten hours' railway journey. Waremme watched every step he took; Waremme, to whom he had given his promise to avoid Anna, who was to go to England in November, to stay there for a year; he had promised that he would not see her before she went. That, however, was not the worst of it. He owed Waremme two thousand eight hundred marks. This was a debt which he must pay within a very few days, no matter what happened; Waremme, in order to help him, and relying on his word of honour, had taken the money from the funds of the "German Congress". This was certainly an unparalleled proof of friendship, and one could not take it ill of Waremme that he was pressing Maurizius to repay him, as he might otherwise be accused of fraud. The sum was replaced two days before the murder; not, of course, by Leonhart, who never knew of its return; but how and by whom was a question that did not come up at the trial. It might have been true, as he afterwards asserted, that Waremme had offered him the money of his own accord, without his first having to ask for it. Waremme was royally generous in money matters; Leonhart, indeed, must have seemed to him rather a sorry fellow, because he was so involved in petty financial anxieties. At the same time, he knew of his friend's difficulties. Leonhart's account with his

tailor had grown to be seven hundred marks; he owed a hundred marks to the riding-school, and four hundred to a little money-lender; and there was a gambling debt of twelve hundred marks, the payment of which could not be postponed. He had not dared apply to Elli during his daily nerve-racking discussions with her; now, of course, it was out of the question. Perhaps it was a vestige of pride that kept him from doing so; perhaps he reflected that he must not just at this time sink into deeper material dependence upon Elli; perhaps it was only the old fear, his mystical fear of her as his judge. Yes, he could send her roses, but he did not dare to appeal to her generosity; he did not wish it to seem that he had sent the flowers only because of his necessity; how base, how unmasked he would seem to her then! So he planned the journey to Frankfurt. There he had some wealthy friends. He thought of his father only when they had refused him, with all the friendliness customary in such cases. He drove by car that very evening to his father's place. The young jeweller's son to whom he had last applied had placed the car at his disposal, in order to make his refusal of a loan less unpleasant. During those hours his mind must have been utterly confused. He could no longer endure to be without Anna; he no longer lived when he did not see her. He sent her a telegram from Frankfurt, to which she did not reply. Now, during his journey, he telegraphed to Elli, announcing his arrival for the following evening. He wanted to go home because Anna was there; he cared about nothing else; not even the financial catastrophe which awaited him if he returned without money. In order to bring his father into a yielding mood he told him a whole series of lies; for example, that he was on the point of starting for Italy; he wanted to complete a thesis which would earn him the title of professor; he wanted to say good-bye before leaving the country; and more to the same effect. But even he, with his slight powers of observation, and his great capacity for self-deception, realized at the third sentence that he could do nothing with the old man; that tears and entreaties would be of no avail, that he might as well try to get something out of

the table that stood between them. Thus one path after another was closed to him. What remained but the mad and frightful deed with which his idle thoughts may perhaps have played in cowardly and greedy longing? He drove to a hotel in Königs-winter, sent the car back, and slept until noon. When he got up he shaved his moustache, bought a long yellow English ulster with a storm-collar, and telegraphed again to Elli, recalling the telegram of the day before; could he have acted more obviously, have sought more deliberately to extricate himself from a hopeless situation? Subsequently, however, he stated that he had first of all wanted to speak to Anna; he had intended to ask her to come into the garden, and had made himself unrecognizable, so that she would not at once know him and refuse to see him. The late hour would have favoured this plan; he would then have proposed that they should fly together that same night. He had been obliged to buy the overcoat because he had only had a summer coat with him, and the weather had suddenly turned cold. A pitiful explanation. The whole continuity of events, the whole chain of evidence, was clear as daylight.

9

Yet this did not prevent Herr von Andergast from being overwhelmed with doubts. It was almost as though he were dissecting himself. The very structure whose solidity had at one time seemed to defy all attack now appeared to his acuter glance to be full of flaws and defects. Was it only experience and time that had sharpened his scrutinizing gaze, now free from professional preoccupation and bias? Had not a certain little dark-lantern bought at Amorbach played its part, not as a figure of speech, but actually, tangibly, though controlled by an invisible hand? Its bright light fell upon the figures and their actions, following them into a still uninvestigated darkness. And a pair of eyes were at work too, a pair of fresh, audacious, sixteen-year-old eyes, and at the back of them was a will which knew how to make itself felt, and which was becoming irresistible in inverse proportion to the physical remoteness of its owner.

It was indeed remoteness which made the apparition so plain; a remoteness, temporal and spatial, which one's own will could no longer control, so that everything which the memory evoked from it became an obsession. There he was again, amidst the eddying, shadowy shapes, a boy of five perhaps, with a brown curly head, dressed in a sailor suit, his hands in his trousers' pockets, his mouth pursed for a cheeky whistle, standing at the top of the staircase, pondering the problem of how to get down without using the stairs. One could see that he scorned the stairs; he had recently announced that he was convinced that he could fly, but that in order to do so he must utter a complicated magic formula, which could be pronounced only after one had gazed into the sun for five minutes without blinking. He tested it once every day, and expressed the greatest impatience at his lack of success; and he was greatly embarrassed when he maintained that he had succeeded, and it was explained to him that he was lying.

Herr von Andergast saw the following picture before him: It was a Sunday morning, and he had taken Etzel to the Liebig Museum. The boy was standing before an antique Venus, staring at her with strangely startled and profoundly astonished eyes. A young lady walked up to Herr von Andergast and greeted him. Etzel fastened an absorbed gaze upon her, and then upon the statue, and then stared again at the living woman; and it seemed to Herr von Andergast that he could hear every word of the hesitating voice: "Are all ladies like that, father, so wonderfully beautiful?" There was a mysterious fear in the question; the shining eyes could not conceal it; the fear of the angels perhaps, when God's outstretched arm points to the accumulated guilt of His creatures, and the path they must tread; a path full of woes, watered with tears, leading through death from earthly love to divine. But this knowledge or foreboding was a thing of to-day, a matter of second sight; at the time he had disregarded it. As he disregarded everything. The manifestation of life is in itself so matter-of-fact. If a person exists he simply exists. Childhood is an imperfect condition; to develop the child as

far as possible is the parent's and teacher's duty. The father is in a position of command; he has to look after his mundane affairs, and the creature he has brought into the world has nothing to do but take him as a model, and to walk obediently in his footsteps. The individual day makes no impression; the hours do not invite one to pause; they must be added up; and the adding of the columns means: promotion from class to class, confirmation, a certificate for the term, a certificate for the year; the final sum gives the content and the value of life. A problem in arithmetic.

Herr von Andergast remembered a serious illness which Etzel had had when he was eight years old. One evening, quite late, he went into the nursery and up to the child's bed. The boy's mother had long ago left his house. The child's face was scarlet, his eyes glistening; his hair, wet with perspiration, clung to his forehead; he was in a high fever. When Etzel saw his father a singular expression of fright came over his features; he turned his head away, stammering inarticulate words. The nurse tried to calm him, stroking his forehead and saying softly: "Why, look, little man, there's father!" But the boy struggled as though he were about to be punished, and his dry lips murmured: "I want Rie." Rie was fetched; she knelt by his bed, taking his little hands in her own. Then he was quiet, only whispering: "I don't want to die, Rie, do you understand?—tell my mother I don't want to die." His "I don't want to" was uttered with such determination that Rie, dropping her usual plaintive manner, replied, with profound earnestness: "That is all right, little Etzel; if you don't want to die you won't; besides, you know we need you." A queer sort of fool, thought Herr von Andergast. Although he was touched, and in great anxiety, her words seemed to him at the time as foolish as they were inappropriate. One may love a child, even if one carefully conceals one's love—and had not "one" concealed it to the point where there was not much left to conceal? But one can't speak of needing a child. And of course one does not "need" children: one needs kings, generals, officers, judges, lawyers, soldiers, workmen, servants;

but children must first be educated to the point of being useful.

No; as a matter of fact one could hardly speak of love either; not even of one of the many variants of the conception. As things had turned out, after the complete collapse of his so-called private life, there was no longer any excuse for self-deception.

He pondered and pondered, seeking and seeking. . . .

Illnesses like that attack of scarlet fever are commonly important stages in a child's development. Herr von Andergast remembered that shortly after this illness he lost sight of the boy in a singular way. He lost sight of him in the sense that he became uncertain of his godlike sway over this human being; the actions which he had been in the habit of commanding had gradually become spontaneous, which was humiliating to the self-esteem of the educator. He found it difficult to understand the boy. He was often aware of a curious unspoken defiance. One could not point to any misbehaviour, to disobedience; it was simply an abstract obstinacy. He remembered a Whitsuntide holiday, when he took the ten-year-old boy into the country. They were sitting in a first-class compartment. Etzel kept on putting his head out of the window. Herr von Andergast told him to stop, to sit quietly in his place. There was, however, no special reason for this prohibition; it had just occurred to him that he wanted to read his paper in peace, and he thought it unseemly for the boy to get excited and constantly poke his head out of the window. Whereupon Etzel sat up straight as a taper, with exaggerated decorum, facing his father and staring him in the face. And his look—although Herr von Andergast pretended not to notice it—was in some way irritating; it was penetrating and amazed, revealing a secret and offensive curiosity as to this man who was his father; there was even a secret gleam of irony in the bright, short-sighted, sharply-peering eyes. For a moment Herr von Andergast was furiously angry; he was on the point of raising his hand and striking the boy. He was taciturn and ill-humoured all that day, feeling the boy's bright glance resting upon him and taking him in.

What mystery there is in such a child! It always seemed as though Etzel was bored in the open highway, seizing every opportunity to dodge round the corner, to accomplish some secret undertaking of his own. When he reappeared he looked as though he had stolen something and were quickly and slyly secreting his booty. And he really was stealing: stealing the experiences which he obtained, and which could not be scrutinized, the words and ideas which he was storing up, the images with which he was filling his insatiable imagination. Everywhere he found accomplices; every door opened into the world, and all new knowledge of the world sullied this untarnished soul. Learning is either a fever or a burden; knowledge is either presumption or obtrusive doubt. Once Herr von Andergast had a talk with the rector about Etzel, and the worthy gentleman remarked: "That boy has a restless spirit; he actually believes only what can be clearly demonstrated, and he enjoys looking for a needle in a haystack; even the good God Himself would not have an easy time with him."

But the reverend gentleman smiled as he spoke: as they all smiled when they spoke of him, or when they merely looked at him. Even the registrar's clerk, dry and dusty as his registers, had a smile on his faded lips when he caught sight of the boy. Even the surly Dr. Malapert smiled whenever he met him in the house. And it was always a friendly, encouraging, unexpectedly cheerful smile with which people greeted him. What could the reason be? It was probably external. There are pigmies who move as though they were giants, and the effect is extraordinarily comical. He certainly had something of the mischievous gnome about him, of the little rogue who looks you candidly in the face and makes a long nose at you as soon as he is out of the room. A few years earlier an old hump-backed great-aunt of Etzel's used to come to the house; she used to smother him with kisses, uttering little moans of affection; when she had finished Etzel would carefully wipe his face, bow gravely and say drily: "Thank you very much, Aunt Rosalie!" Was it the comical effect of his courteously respectful bearing, with its undercurrent of mischief,

either planned or accomplished, that won him such general favour? Undoubtedly he had a natural grace, a quick, pleasing audacity, both of which he had probably inherited from his mother, who as a young girl had had the same kind of graceful audacity, and had been just as incomprehensible. Or did the answer lie a little deeper; did the attraction reside in what Dr. Camill Raff, in his valuable psychological analysis, had called his "sense of proportion"; did people feel clearly that he had taken their measure correctly, that he did not demand too much of them, so to speak, and allowed them to be simply what they were?

Whatever it might be that was peculiar in the boy, whatever it was that everyone so promptly acknowledged, Herr von Andergast, for his part, had been but faintly conscious of it. If from time to time it forced itself on his attention he refused to admit its existence, since he thought it his duty to disregard it. He could not have reconciled it with his fundamental principles. It would have distorted their rigid outlines. It would have been detrimental to order; it would have broken the rules, and one would have had to abandon one's general "lines of advance".

Only when he now looked back did it seem to him that in all this he had really been renouncing something quite different; perhaps, for example, a certain permissible sense of well-being. Perhaps he had renounced something which one might call the will to love. On thinking this over, it seemed to him that he had found an adequate and pregnant expression for a condition of sterile abstinence of which he was the embodiment. And further, it seemed to him . . . Well, what if it was so? It was too late now, much too late, from every point of view.

CHAPTER VII

I

ON the last day of the week which had begun with the perusal of the Maurizius records Herr von Andergast came home one afternoon at tea-time, and as he was passing along the corridor he heard low voices proceeding from Etzel's room. The door was ajar; he halted, and saw his mother sitting at the table, with Rie facing her. They had Etzel's exercise-books before them; Rie had probably collected them from the drawers and shelves. The *Generalin* was turning the pages, here and there reading a few lines, and from time to time making a comment under her breath. She had hoped, perhaps, to find something there, a note, or a forgotten letter, which might give some indication of the boy's whereabouts. All her other efforts had been in vain. A cloud of sadness hung over the two women. The widow, in an old-fashioned lace mantilla, with an equally old-fashioned cloth toque on her little head, looked woebegone. She was still unable to understand Etzel's flight; she was even less able to understand the fact that he had not given her, whom he had so flatteringly convinced of his affection, any sign of his existence. She was consumed with worry. Herr von Andergast noticed her chin; it was sharp and small like Etzel's; and he heard her saying to Rie: "We must not be discouraged, dear Rie. I have the most implicit confidence. The stupid part of it is simply that I am so old. But that too has its advantages. The absence of the people one loves gradually accustoms one to death. There is so much absence, and the world is so big."

Herr von Andergast, who was wearing goloshes, as the weather was rainy, went back through the hall, without being heard, and without having taken off his coat, went down the stairs, and left the house. The thought of greeting his mother politely, of looking at Rie's mournfully lined, humbly reproachful face, of being condemned to sit at a desk loaded with legal documents until evening, until late at night, with no company but an ink-well, note-books, the chairs, the sofa, the ugly pictures

on the walls, and the books, exuding silence, was suddenly unendurable.

He walked on swiftly until he came to an open field near the Dammheide. There the wind was doubly violent; the rain lashed his face, and the flashing skeins of water stung like whips. Since he had no umbrella (he objected on principle to an umbrella) he was soon wet to the skin. He took no heed of his condition. The place was utterly deserted; not a house, not a cottage was visible. After every ten yards or so he stopped to recover his breath, gripping the brim of his hat, and peering about him; but his mind was not on the landscape, the storm, the whirling leaves of the avenue, the low, threatening clouds; it was directed inwards. The strain of intense thought was visible on his forehead. With every minute his frown became more pronounced. Gradually he seemed to become oblivious of his surroundings, to forget where he was, and whither he was going, and from time to time he would speak aloud, uttering fragments of sentences and detached thoughts; and this was a thing so remote from his character and his usual habits that the very expression of his face was changed, losing its rigid crust like soil that is being ploughed.

2

He could not deceive himself about it: there was a flaw in the network of logic. And with that he began to reconsider the case. Up to a certain point he found the flaw excusable; the evidence was overwhelming; from the very outset they had followed only the one direction. It has long been the experience of criminologists that every crime has a suggestive force of its own. An error of justice was not to be thought of. Not in this case. If a flaw in the structure should reveal itself now, after so long an interval, one would have to investigate the matter in secret. "In any case, no official proceedings." To direct the public attention to this long-forgotten affair would be an appalling stupidity. "If I say: It is possible that the whole truth has not yet been revealed, I

have already said too much. Perhaps . . . well, perhaps . . . we shall see. . . .”

He pressed his lips together and fixed his glance on the dripping summit of an elm-tree. He was willing to admit that they ought to have watched Gregor Waremme, at least for a time, after sentence was passed, although this would have been purely a matter for the police. But if at that time they had given their attention to what occurred after the trial, if they had been authorized to do so, they would probably have secured some useful information concerning his previous life. This had not been done; and it now seemed to Herr von Andergast that the omission was incomprehensible. Nothing was known about the man's past, nothing was mentioned. After all, why should it have been mentioned? It was not the duty of the court to speak of it, nor was it in its interest to do so. The witness for the crown is a precious possession; the court would think twice before undermining his credibility. Strictly speaking, the case stood and fell with Waremme. Without him, in view of the obstinate and absolutely crazy denials of the perpetrator, the case could not have been brought to a successful close; at all events, only with the greatest difficulty. A “successful close”, of course, meant a verdict of guilty and the passing of sentence.

“Undoubtedly, there are weak points. Let us examine them calmly.” Herr von Andergast diminished his unwontedly long stride in order to collate these weak points. They must have been more numerous than he had supposed, for after a while he compressed his lips more tightly than ever. There was no satisfactory explanation of the relations between Waremme and Anna Jahn. Something must have happened, as far back as the time in Cologne, to cast a shadow on their mutual relations. Her rehearsal of a part in a play, under his direction, her pathological aversion for the theatre and all things theatrical: no one had investigated these. There was not a hint as to the nature of this friendship; whether it had an erotic basis, whether they had any thought of a future marriage. . . . Waremme's one remark to Elli Maurizius—that he would soon bring her convincing proof

of Anna's innocence—proved nothing at all. What did "innocence" mean from his lips; what would the term mean to such a man as he? One ought to know something about their relations after 1906. But as to these they were wholly in the dark. After sentence had been passed the actors disappeared from the stage. The law knows only the case as such; it cannot meddle with the subsequent life of the actors. "What I myself know as a private person I have no business to know." But Herr von Andergast, in private life, knew nothing and noted nothing of the actions and omissions of witnesses or condemned persons; in this respect he was like a chemical substance which will permit another substance to react upon it only under certain physical circumstances. He reflected: if the intimacy between Anna Jahn and Waremme had been more than a friendship, the man would certainly have taken a firmer stand against the importunities to which she was subjected by her brother-in-law. On the other hand, he used to call on her quite informally at her flat, and escort her to parties and athletic meetings, and undoubtedly behaved like her cavalier and protector. Again, if she had not given him this right it was inexplicable that after the last and worst scene with Elli she should have been persuaded by him to remove to her sister's house, to trust herself, so to speak, in the lion's den. One could only assume that she had been deprived of her free will, to be able to forget, overnight, the flagrant manner in which Elli had slandered her. And what about her financial position? It was, of course, hopeless. She was helping Waremme as his secretary; he probably paid her for that, but if not, if her assistance was gratuitous, then more than ever one must presume an intimate relation. This, however, she utterly denied. Who supplied her with the means of livelihood, since she nevertheless was leading the life of a woman of means? Who paid for her luxurious flat? Leonhart? He denied it. Waremme? The question was not discussed. In either case, it was a curious situation; distinctly ambiguous. . . . But to proceed. . . . Since she was the cause of the upheavals between her sister and Leonhart, and must undoubtedly have been aware of this, why did she

remain, even though she felt herself to be guiltless, and presumably not the least sufferer by the situation? If she had a horror of her persistent suitor, why did she continue to receive him? If she was sick and tired of the man who was imperilling her reputation, why did she constantly show herself with him in public? If he permitted himself to be so carried away by his passion, if he made such shameless overtures to her, in her sister's, his wife's house, that she was beside herself with indignation and contempt, why did she resume her relations with him? Why did she ring him up, attend his lectures, and keep his photograph, with its passionate and quite unequivocal inscription, in her desk? She could not protect herself against him, she declared; she had put the best face on a bad business, lest he should lose his head completely, and in his madness drag her down into destruction, with Elli and himself.

Was that plausible? "At that time it seemed plausible enough. Good God, a child of nineteen; so pitifully inexperienced; such children often get entangled precisely because of their profound innocence. Possibly she was flattered by the passion she had aroused; she was basking in the blaze which she had kindled; who knows what women will do?" . . . Herr von Andergast reluctantly shook his head. It occurred to him that this was too lax a standpoint. She ought to have left the city; one must hold it against her that she had remained, daily offering fresh fuel to this criminal passion. She should have disappeared into the night; she should have faced any uncertainty rather than remain to kindle this mortal dissension between the two; all unwillingly, let us assume. But what if she had been playing a double game? What if both men had merely been her pawns? Or what—he would go to the very limit of possibility in his imputations—what if she had been in collusion with Waremme, and had manipulated the situation to its final catastrophe in accordance with some preconcerted plan? Could one admit such a hypothesis? No, it was not admissible. It was not by any means admissible. It was a foolish, sensational hypothesis. Even the boldest of slanderers did not dare at the time to make such an insinuation; even those

who were most assiduous in whitewashing Maurizius refrained from giving expression to such an idea. Nevertheless, thought Herr von Andergast, let us follow even this tenuous clue down into the abyss; let us suppose that this was the case; then the two must have been very certain that the eighty thousand marks which were Elli's fortune—and it was this fortune that must have been at stake—would be inherited by Anna Jahn. What about the will? Herr von Andergast had resolved to inform himself as to the existence and the wording of the will. There was, however, no will; and since the husband, as the murderer of his wife, was eliminated as incapable of inheriting, and the marriage had been childless, the sister was the lawful heiress. Yet one could not descend so far as this: no, not so deep into the abyss. For then, in a calculation which defied all human foresight, they must have been absolutely certain that Maurizius would put his head into the noose in such a fashion that it would only be necessary to tighten that noose, and everything—crime, evidence, witnesses—would in the end mesh in together. "Nonsense! Damned nonsense! Things like that don't happen. We must have seen something of it. A web so meticulously woven becomes entangled and snares the weaver. . . ."

Herr von Andergast stood still. As a result of his struggle against the storm, or against the burden of the thoughts which were flooding his mind, an unhealthy flush had come over his face; the veins of his forehead stood out like blue cords, and in his melancholy, narrowed eyes a terror was revealed that he had never yet known.

The image of Waremmé, no longer to be gainsaid, invaded his memory. He could see the man clearly before him. The bold forehead, the fixed, sidelong gaze into space, the protruding shark-like jaw, all fairly reeking of brutality, the great head with the short bristling hair, and the rather corpulent figure. It needed a fellow of another calibre than this nerveless puppet of a Maurizius to stand up against him. Yet those who knew him well spoke of a severe neurosis, of the fits of depression and convulsive weeping to which he was frequently subject. This body, which,

despite its normal proportions, produced an impression of immensity, might house an arsenal of destructive functions, as does happen in the case of those who belong to quite a different period than that in which they live. He gave his age: twenty-nine; but it seemed as though this were the mere accident of a birth-certificate. When he opened his mouth everyone listened intently, even to his most indifferent remark. What compelled their attention was neither his voice nor his choice of words, but his precision of expression, the superiority of his bearing. His hearers had the feeling that here was a man who knew what he was about, as though hitherto they had seen only bunglers at work, and were now confronted by a master. Between him and all the other witnesses there was a difference like that between trivial fragments and a well-rounded whole. His appearance was such that the president at once perceptibly pulled himself together, and the counsel for the defence, helpless little Dr. Volland, had the look of a crushed nonentity. Useless here were such attempts as are commonly practised, now on the witnesses for the prosecution, now on those for the defence: the sarcastic comments, the affable catch-questions, the triumphant discovery of contradictions, for which the witnesses must then apologize with such phrases as "one heard badly", "one was mistaken", or with assurances that the prosecuting attorney "had heard wrongly" or "had made a mistake". Here was no scope for the admonitions, the aids to recollection, the tricky cross-examinations, which will in the end reduce seamstresses, taxi-drivers, postmen, and even persons of higher standing to a state of blundering tremor, but which would in this case have been utterly out of place; for Waremmé was as matter-of-fact, as cool and collected as a glass of water. During his examination Herr von Andergast could not help saying to himself: "Thank Heaven that he is not on the prisoner's bench; we should be no match for him." The leading counsel grew more polite and respectful with every question; the court was so quiet that the humming of the ventilator over the window became unendurable. Every word was now decisive. To the president's question as to his opinion of the prisoner's

behaviour before he was arrested, Waremmé answered that he believed that he might count on the approval of the court if he replied that it was not for him to express any opinion, that his sole duty was to state what he had seen and witnessed. This was accepted; curiously enough, they acquiesced, although the words sounded like a reprimand. The judge, the attorney-general, the counsel for the defence and the jury all appeared subordinate to him; he himself, by his mere presence, seemed to be there in a judicial capacity, and his statement had the weight of a judicial decision. The emotion in his features conveyed itself to his whole audience. They understood that he was struggling against the necessity of surrendering the unhappy man who was his friend to the hangman, but that what he knew and had seen must prevail; his oath compelled him; "this is what I saw; this and that is what occurred; I stand here, and I cannot do otherwise". And behind him Leonhart Maurizius, his face gleaming with a transparent pallor, staring at him with eyes that grew wide with a deathly terror, sprang to his feet, and stretched out his hands imploringly. Waremmé turned towards him, and suddenly reeled: the military ushers caught him as he fell; and he lost consciousness. He, not Maurizius! This scene made a tremendous impression; it seemed a psychological confirmation of his statement. . . .

Herr von Andergast stood still again, pulled his handkerchief out of an inner pocket, and wiped his forehead. The handkerchief was at once wringing wet. His beard was like a wet sponge. His eyelids were swollen, and he could open them only with difficulty. Of all this he was regardless.

A thorough investigation of the character of this Gregor Waremmé would certainly have led to interesting results, thought Herr von Andergast, continuing his ruminations; and he struggled on against the storm. We learned nothing of his background; and of the surface, only what he cared to show. There was an atmosphere of obscurity about him, and a theatrical suddenness in his appearance and disappearance. Nothing further was heard of him. Singular. Such a distinguished intellect, such a will; so

influential a man, who raised such expectations, who played so conspicuous a part; and after his brief appearance he disappears, leaving no trace. Most extraordinary; a phenomenon of his age. Can one take seriously old Maurizius's statement that he has found out where he is now living? Herr von Andergast paused at the thought, which led him to a decision which he uttered aloud: "I must send for the old man at the next opportunity. He must have a sharp warning. A crazy fellow, malicious in his insinuations against Anna Jahn. . . ."

Anna Jahn. . . . Her figure appeared before him, and Herr von Andergast made a gesture as though he would ask her to wait a little; he would presently give her his attention. A moment's patience, he seemed to say. Waremmé had almost entirely convinced him, just as of old; the completed picture left nothing to be desired; it suggested no further questions; yet if one studied the details carefully, the lines became blurred, and the whole fell into confusion. Firstly, what became of the revolver? Did Leonhart Maurizius possess one before the date of the murder? They were never able to prove it. Waremmé saw him take it out of his coat pocket; he saw him take aim. It was, however, never found in the garden, nor anywhere within a radius of a hundred yards. Theoretically, under such conditions, it was conceivable that someone had fired the shot from outside the garden; a possibility which was sufficiently emphasized by the counsel for the defence. But who could have fired the shot? Who in the whole world? Secondly: what happened when Maurizius came into the garden? Elli, after the second telegram, which cancelled the first, could no longer have expected him. From whom did she learn that he was coming? Of course, from Anna. He had not cancelled the telegram to Anna, asking her to meet him at the station; either because he had lost his head, and had already forgotten all about it, or because he secretly hoped that she would perhaps come after all. Thus Anna, who presumably understood at once that the second telegram to Elli was merely a blind, intended to gain time, told her sister that Leonhart was on the point of arriving. Good. She did not reply to the telegram; she

gave it no further attention, but rather made sure of her friend's assistance before the return of the man she feared. Perfectly logical. But why did she not go away? It would have been the simplest course to take. She had merely to leave the house and go to some acquaintance in town. Why did she stay? Stay, stay, stay on and on? If it was her intention that he should find only Elli, that Elli, restless and eager as she was, should receive him—for before his departure he did not even say good-bye to her—the wisest thing she could have done was to have disappeared; and there was not the slightest necessity to send for Waremmé. The reply to this was that she had to watch her sister, that she could not leave Elli alone in a condition of excitement that was bordering on madness. If that really was so! There had been a reconciliation between the two sisters, but it was, apparently, of brief duration; or perhaps Elli could not bear the sight of her rival; for after she had lain sobbing and crying uncontrollably the whole afternoon, she had rung for the maid, Frieda, and asked her to keep her company; she was so terribly afraid. All this time Anna was playing the piano. Herr von Andergast remembered that this fact had astonished him at the time. She had explained it, with a certain plausibility, by her mental distraction; upstairs was her sister, hardly accountable for her actions; downstairs she was alone, shuddering at the thought of the arrival of the desperate man whose attempts to raise money had presumably been pitifully unsuccessful. So she played Schumann's *Carnival*, and as she did so she had terrifying visions of suspicious characters prowling around the house. Leonhart would be there in a few minutes. She could not bear it any longer; she rushed to the telephone, imploring Waremmé to come to her. Very good, very good; only it might look as though Waremmé had been waiting for the call. Everything fitted together too nicely. One might even suspect that Elli had become alarmed at the very last moment, and the question which the counsel for the defence put to Anna Jahn—how it was that Elli, in her suffering condition, in spite of the heart attack from which she had been suffering since the morning, could have left the

room and the house, in order not merely to go, but to fly to her husband, had not been a random shot. It was a critical moment; the jury raised their heads; the remark of the president that Fräulein Jahn could hardly give any information on this point, since she had not acted in the capacity of a trained nurse, had met with the disapproval of the public. But then there was old Gottlieb Wilhelm Jahn, an uncle of the two sisters, who was called upon to testify in regard to his nieces; he had very strongly influenced the minds of the jury when he turned towards the prisoner's bench, and with upraised hand exclaimed: "The wretch not only killed the body of the one woman, his wife and his only friend, but he killed the mind and soul of the other. The curse of all mankind rests upon him!" As the old man with the tremendous white beard uttered these words, Anna folded her hands and closed her eyes. It was, like the fainting of Waremme, one of the great moments of the trial.

Herr von Andergast walked on more rapidly and with longer strides. It seemed as though it were yesterday; there she stood in her tight black dress, with the white pleated collar, and the white lace sleeves falling over her slender white hands. He had seen, shortly before the trial, a reproduction of Clouet's portrait of Mary Stuart, and he still remembered how surprised he was by the resemblance between Anna Jahn and this portrait. The tortured mouth, the eyes "in whose glance was infinity", as an excited journalist wrote at the time, the nobility of her movements and the fragility of her figure: these were things to remember. It was blasphemy to think that such a creature could even know of the existence of lies; why, she lived in a world apart, frozen into some inaccessible element! The court and the jury regarded her as a martyr. "She stood out from the trial like a white flower from a black curtain", wrote the same excited journalist. Judicially regarded, moreover, she was, so to speak, the pivot of the prosecution; if Herr von Andergast had allowed the emphasis to be shifted, the ground would have disappeared from beneath his feet. And after all, in the whole wide world there was only one possible criminal. There was absolutely no

one else. He had no accomplice, no confidant. Where would one have looked for them? "And so it followed, past all denial, that the path was traced for us, for me, as with a diamond stylus. . . ."

He defended himself against a gust of wind as though it were a last onslaught of doubt, and said, standing motionless: "Therefore the verdict also is unassailable. At every point." And after a few paces he again stood still: "I take the whole responsibility upon myself!" And again, after walking a few steps farther, he almost shouted: "No, the verdict is unassailable!"

But this declaration, however final it might sound, did not smother the most elusive of his doubts. The apprehension in his eyes spread like a spot of ink on a blotter. He mentally avoided this apprehension, timidly circumnavigating it in his thoughts. He was not honest with himself, and he was painfully conscious of this want of honesty, as of a disturbance of his psychical equilibrium. As a child he had noted, day after day, week after week, with increasing aversion, a clock whose pendulum had swung with a defective and irregular oscillation. He was forced to think of it constantly. On the Rödelheimer Strasse he called an empty taxi and drove back to town. Half asleep, wet to the skin, he leaned back in a corner of the taxi. "Where can the boy be?" The query suddenly shot into his mind. His thoughts no longer obeyed him. In that moment he understood how many children long to be ill so that they need not go to school. But how would it have helped him to be ill? What was there for him anywhere apart from "school"? Yes, he could withdraw into his detestable bedroom, as into some remote cavern; and there, from time to time, that objectionable Rie would come tripping up to his bed, and he would not even be able to send for little Violet.

3

Violet Winston was a young Californian, whom he had met three years ago after a men's dinner at the Russischer Hof. She was sitting in the hotel lounge, trying in vain to make a waiter understand her. Herr von Andergast had offered his

services as interpreter. She had arrived only a few days earlier; she had crossed the Atlantic with the intention of studying in the Stern Conservatoire; she did not know a soul in the city, was entirely alone in the world, and had the means of livelihood for another half-year only. She became his mistress, and he rented a modest flat for her, a long way from his house, on the Pestalozziplatz, where she received him two or three times a month. The relationship had been veiled in the greatest secrecy; thanks to the rigorous caution of Herr von Andergast all talk had hitherto been avoided.

It is a stimulating task to construct the image of his mistress from the character of a man whom one knows. In many cases it is possible to be approximately correct without relying too cheaply on mere contrasts, or merely conventional attractions. If we bear in mind that (as in this case) the darker elements of a man's character cannot be resolved by erotic experience, and cannot even be abstracted from the other elements; that inveterate frigidity cannot advance beyond the outer walls of life, knows nothing of its warmth, and is familiar only with its external and delusive aspect, the choice which Herr von Andergast made in the young American will no longer surprise us. She offered him nothing; she was nothing to him, for she had nothing to give; she herself was nothing. And this nothing was just what he needed. Intellect, piquancy, temperament, culture—why should these mean anything to him, since he sought neither excitement, nor exaltation, and hardly even what we call distraction? What he wanted was some sort of opportunity for rest and relaxation, which would, incidentally, allow him to function as a human male when the need asserted itself; and this was compatible with ignorance and banality rather than with more distinguished qualities. He had been living for ten years without a wife, and he knew that the desires of the body cannot be permanently stifled without imperilling one's mental equilibrium. His virility was unexhausted; his grey beard and bald head were symptoms of the passage of time, but not of internal decline or weakness. He came of a family whose men and women reached

the age of eighty and ninety in vigorous health, and he had the physical freshness of those who have never been guilty of dissipation and are conscious of an unexhausted store of energy. After his separation from Sophia he had avoided any connection with women, and had ceased to expect anything from them. He had simply excluded such experiences from his life. But it was not merely from principle that he acted thus. He had had an experience which had given his pride an almost mortal wound, and this wound was not yet healed; it could never heal. To think of it merely sent the blood seething and scalding to his heart. The idea that such an experience might repeat itself in any form was enough to hold temptation at a distance. In this connection (and indeed in any connection) faith and confidence were now impossible to him. Who should know better than he what people meant by love, how they deluded themselves with it, and what it really amounted to? He could have written an encyclopædia of the categories of degeneration, the pitiful compromises, the tragic and trivial miseries, which formed the content of the three hundred working days of his year, and, in intolerable reiteration, the content of all the other days of all the years. A letter, a number, an entry in the records, and a man was nothing but a person who had undergone punishment. Though the fingerprints of such men are not found in the records, one may read in their eyes, on their foreheads, a no less incriminating sign. Let them read *Faust*, or repeat and repeat the Lord's Prayer, or disfigure their walls with moral maxims as pious Jews nail texts from the Scriptures on the door-posts; this will not keep a single one of them from fraud, embezzlement, theft, perjury or rape, if they have the slightest prospect of evading the consequences. Strictly speaking, there were not good people and bad, honest and dishonest, lambs and wolves; there were only people with good reputations and people with bad, people who had been punished and people who had not been; that was the whole difference; and that they were in the one class or the other was determined not by any quality or defect, but by some accident beyond their control. He did not inquire about the man or the

woman. He was not concerned with the individual man or woman. Ranks and classes, trades, professions and social groups, antecedents, social bonds and divisions, all the conditions and vicissitudes of life, human strength and weakness, human powers of expression—he had all these at his fingers' ends, so that he could talk as readily to a locksmith, a peasant, a prostitute, in their own language, as to a countess or a minister. Of the real personality and its permanence he knew nothing, and wished to know nothing. And so to him it was proper and agreeable that Violet Winston should be a female, just as a roach in a pond is a specimen of its species, just like a hundred thousand others, whose capture is the result of an accident unworthy of any special attention.

She was pretty, friendly, good-natured, complaisant, inoffensive. She had a white skin, a white, insignificant face, straw-coloured hair, whose washed-out colour seemed to echo the insignificance of her features, little plump, round hands like a baby's, and beautiful, slender legs. Her big foolish blue eyes, when their glance rested upon him, reminded him of nothing whatever. When her crimsoned lips parted in a smile, revealing her tiny white teeth, it was as though these too wished to share in the sweet vacuity of her whole personality. If one could have taken her to pieces, in order to discover what she really felt for her big, sombre friend, one would probably have found, besides a certain tepid, animal affection, the affection of a creature in need of protection, nothing but a little foolish fear. And because of this fear, she admired him. Yes, she admired him; much as the little roach might admire the great voracious pike which does not devour it merely because it despises it too much. When she sat on his lap, languishing and uncomprehending, she could never speak of herself save as "poor girl" and "poor little Violet". And she was always full of stupid little outbursts of surprise at the dissimilarities of human creatures. The conversation between them turned for the most part on inanimate things. She had a picture of Sacramento, the city which was her home, over her bed. Herr von Andergast was of opinion that the picture was hung

fully three inches too low. The conversation on this point lasted over a quarter of an hour. She was fond of flowers, but did not know how to arrange them; this offered an opportunity for endless discussion; whether, for example, to put pink lilacs and red carnations in the same vase. Although she dressed well her taste was slightly barbaric, and she liked scent which was a little too strong. Herr von Andergast instructed her and reprimanded her constantly, seriously, drily and patiently. He would have regarded impatience, in dealing with such a dear little nonentity, as a waste of energy. She would give him an account of her expenditure, and when there was a superfluous item on the list he would scold her gently, until her foolish blue eyes would fill with foolish tears; whereupon he would smile indulgently. She had many faults; she was forgetful, flirtatious, greedy, rather thoughtless. But it was all so trivial! She, including her faults, amounted to so little that one could not be angry with anything so unimportant. A little white fish. Sometimes she would sit down at the piano and sing the songs of her home. Her silly little voice would fill the room like the chirping of a little insect, and she would accompany herself with her silly, plump little baby hands. It was a perfect idyll.

4

Herr von Andergast still felt his walk through the storm in all his limbs when he called on Violet. He had dined at home and had carefully changed his clothes. She complained, pouting. She felt neglected; his visits had recently become more and more infrequent. In her amusing broken German—he had insisted on her learning German—she said that she felt deserted, “like a single shoe”. Herr von Andergast appeased her as easily as one blows out a burning match. She had had a bad day. She had lost her gold wrist-watch. She said that she would never again know what time it was. “Poor little Violet has lost the time!” At night she would wake up every hour, afraid lest she should waste the daylight, and would wait for the horrid big church clock to strike. Herr von Andergast looked as though

he were considering a chess problem, and said that they would try to get her a new watch, but she must notify the police of her loss. He told her how to find the police-station, and described the necessary formalities. Meanwhile she sat facing him, gazing at him with unbounded admiration. She had bought him a brand of cigarettes which he particularly liked; she brought the box, moving swiftly, gave him a match, and lighted a cigarette herself, after which they peacefully and minutely discussed the flavour, the price, and the fact that the tobacco was a little too strong. As Herr von Andergast rubbed his hand over his forehead several times, she finally noticed how tired he looked, and in reply to her anxious question he admitted that he had a pretty bad headache. She opened her eyes wide in dismay, as though the thought that such a big creature could be ill, or even indisposed, had never occurred to her. In a scared, piping voice she suggested various remedies; when he mildly but decidedly refused them she began to scold him, and he permitted her to do so. She told him that he ought to lie down and rest. He admitted this, and obeyed. He lay down upon the sofa, and she covered him up with a big shawl, put out all the lights, except a shaded lamp in the corner, and said that she would leave him alone; she would go into her bedroom and would not disturb him. On the threshold she turned again, and stroking his temples with her plump fingers she said, with an affectionate little mew: "You are a naughty boy!" nodding her head precociously. "You work too much, and you think too much! Sure!" He smiled amiably. He accepted her compassionate censure with the seriousness with which one accepts a make-believe coin from a child who declares it to be a gold-piece.

He lay for a long time with open eyes in the half-darkened room, curiously empty of thought. How much time had elapsed when he got up he did not know. He looked at his watch, but he was so distraught that he had forgotten the time when he had closed the lid. He gently opened the door into the adjoining room. Violet lay in bed asleep. At the foot of the bed a pink-shaded electric light hung from the ceiling. Violet preferred

electric light, and she never slept in the dark. She was afraid of the dark, and was impervious to admonition in this respect. Herr von Andergast stood by the bed, looking down on the sleeper. Since Nature erases all mental activity from a sleeping face, it reverts to its natural condition. In little Violet's case there was as little erasing to be done as in any mortal creature. She lay there, then, wholly a vegetable, in the faint glow of the sentimental pink lamp-shade above her, and of her own youth and health. From time to time an expression of fear flitted across her face, making her for the moment seem a few years older, but it was only like a passing ripple, that had no visible cause in any troubling of the water. She sighed; her bosom rose, and then her body lay still again. Herr von Andergast, like all who hold fast to consciousness as the only power in life, did not like the sight of people asleep; indeed, he had always to overcome a slight feeling of repulsion when he saw a sleeping face. He walked over to the dressing-table, sat down in the arm-chair, and waited, his face a little averted from the bed. The mirror above the dressing-table was so placed that he could see the sleeper when he looked into the glass. The position was characteristic of him; it was his nature to be indirect. Gradually, however, he seemed to forget where he was; his chin sank slowly upon his breast; his eyes, indescribably hard, indescribably sinister, stared penetratingly into some hidden depth; and thus he sat hour after hour. As he sat there, silently staring, there was something monstrous in the powerful figure, the massive skull, the stony impassivity of the face. When he finally raised his head again and looked into the mirror he saw not himself, not Violet asleep, but he saw . . . Waremmé. That is to say, he saw a person whom he at once assumed to be Waremmé, but who bore only a vague resemblance to that Waremmé whom he had last seen eighteen and a half years ago. But of this person he could see only the upper part of the body, which was somewhat over life-size. His right arm was extended—the left being supported on his hip—and on the palm of his hand stood Etzel, very small, of course, but very valiant; indeed, there was a faintly imper-

tinient expression on his face. He held a dark-lantern in his hand, and the light of the lantern fell on the face of Waremmé (or whoever the person was) and made it completely transparent, as though the skin and bones were made of gelatine, so that the brain, on which the light was chiefly directed, was completely revealed. The whole mass of the brain, with its fissures, lobes and convolutions, its endless veins and arteries, contracted continually under the action of the light, inescapable, probing as the surgeon's knife; and as the rays moved hither and thither, directed by the sinewy little fist, as if to discover a particular spot, the whole repulsive jelly-like mass, painfully quivering, gradually became visible in its minutest details. "What's happening to me?" thought Herr von Andergast, angrily. "I am seeing ghosts, seeing ghosts with my eyes open!" He pressed his fingers upon his eyes, and the next time he looked into the mirror he saw nothing but the young girl asleep, with the rosy light of the lamp upon her, smiling under the influence of some pleasant and certainly insignificant dream.

Herr von Andergast quickly rose and returned into the living-room. He sat down at the rickety, thin-legged little desk, took some paper and an envelope out of a writing-case, held his pen up to the light before he began to write, and then wrote, in a large hand, with the letters sloping forwards, the l's and t's and f's looking like telegraph-poles in the wind: "Dear Violet: This evening has been the last which I can spend with you. The outstanding accounts will be settled and your monthly allowance of one hundred and fifty marks will be continued until the first of July. Wishing you all good fortune on your way through life, W.A." After he had put the note into the envelope and addressed it "To Miss Violet Winston" he leaned it against the stand of the desk-lamp, switched off the light, went very quietly into the narrow, cage-like hall, slipped into his cloak, pressed his hard felt hat down upon his forehead, and went out on to the landing, slowly closing the door. As he strode down the street he presently noticed that the rain had stopped, and that a brilliant starry sky was spread over the city.

5

The servant announced that Peter Paul Maurizius, who had an appointment for eleven o'clock, was in the waiting-room. Dr. Nämlich, a State attorney, stuffed his documents into a brief-bag and disappeared. Herr von Andergast sat for a time with his head on his hand, an open notebook before him. He wanted to be clear in his own mind as to what he wished to learn from the old man. He would have to weigh every word. It would be necessary to occupy him for a while with his own affairs in order to take him by surprise with a question about Etzel. Up to what point he could mislead and confuse the old man, and set him on a false scent, would have to be determined in the course of the conversation. In what an annoying and tormenting manner the two situations had suddenly coalesced into one! How annoying and tormenting was the mysterious puzzle: Where is Etzel? It had become confounded with that fruitless puzzling over a criminal who was already given over to a just punishment. Only now, when he heard the name Maurizius, did Herr von Andergast realize that he had not sent for the old man merely "to warn him", and at the same time to get something out of him concerning which the records gave no clear information. This was the weaker impulse; the essential point was to ask him about the boy, to learn something of Etzel, to lessen the ceaseless anxiety which, as matters now stood, he could no longer talk himself out of; to relieve something else too, something more unusual, more troublesome; a longing, an emptiness, a discontent, an impatience, something that gnawed and stabbed as though some internal organ had been injured, of whose existence he had never before been conscious.

Old Maurizius, having made a low bow, remained standing at the door. He wore a kind of shooting-jacket with bone buttons. On his stiff left arm rested the inevitable seaman's cap. Herr von Andergast, from under his half-closed eyelids, cast a sidelong glance at him; the glance of the criminologist, which discovers in a second what a long examination will often fail to reveal.

But in this instance the gain was small. A weather-beaten, pinched, obstinate, impassive face of an old man. Nevertheless, the sullen apathy of the old fellow was only a deliberate disguise. Behind this outward rigidity expectation was pounding like an iron hammer in his breast. He felt that at last the great turning-point had been reached. How was anything else possible; what other reason was there for the invitation; what was the import of his mysterious interviews with the boy? He scarcely dared to think. Since he had received the note from the attorney-general's office he had neither eaten nor slept; he had even forgotten to fill his pipe, or when he had filled it he had forgotten to light it. And now here he stood, ready to listen, ready to speak. But he distrusted his tongue; he was afraid of saying the wrong thing, something premature and harmful. He felt as though he were standing not on the floor but in the air, as though if he took a step forward he must fall. "Control yourself, man!" he kept repeating to himself; "that fellow too is made of flesh and bone!"

"I have asked you to come in order to put an end to your written importunities. Take care; you may get yourself into trouble." The voice sounded cold. There was no note of promise in this, nor of a change of mind. Ah, well, that was just a beginning. These lawyers, when they wanted to go to Rome, behaved as though they were on the road to Amsterdam. Maurizius bowed. That was all. The walls of his nose flattened against the bone; his nostrils became quite concave. He was immensely intimidated by the majestic appearance of the man at the desk. He felt himself as dependent upon this man as a bell is dependent on the beam from which it swings. He trembled at every fresh word, but betraying nothing of this he stared straight ahead, like a helmsman with his eyes upon an approaching reef. The man who controlled his fate held a pencil in his hand, which he twisted constantly between his fingers, so that the point was now uppermost, now undermost. This was curious; one ought to know why he did it; he could not be trying to frighten one by that.

"I should like to take this opportunity to ask you some

questions; but please note that the conversation is not official, and does not bind us to anything on either side. Take a chair."

This sounded better already. "Well, well, we are getting somewhere!" He did not accept the invitation to sit down. That might be a pitfall. He merely replied with his stereotyped bow. It was the politeness of a penguin.

What had led him to assume that the lawyer, Dr. Volland, had been forced upon his son at the trial? Maurizius rubbed his lips together to moisten them. Sparks like those of a ridiculous firework were flashing before his eyes. If only the man would stop twisting his pencil round and round! It was enough to drive one crazy. The pencil grew longer and longer; it grew as tall as a church steeple. . . . Now, precious thoughts, be good and stay by me!

"It was not a mere assumption, sir; Leonhart told me that he had been asked to accept him." That pencil, that damned pencil! And a diamond, too, was glittering on his finger. Very well, very well, one must simply look out of the window; though it was better to look the danger in the face, the danger that threatened all his hopes. Had he said that correctly? Had he made himself understood? He felt as though his mouth were full of sand, and he could not speak properly.

"By whom was it desired?"

"It was suggested to him."

"By a certain person?"

"By a certain person."

"He was possibly mistaken as to the real state of affairs."

"Very improbable, sir." (To himself he added: that's as sure as Cologne Cathedral.)

"The suggestion might have come from the family."

"That, of course, was possible, but there was only old Jahn, Gottlieb Wilhelm Jahn."

"Well, then?"

"Six of one, half a dozen of the other, sir."

"What do you mean by that?"

"All he thought of was to destroy my son."

"Nonsense, man! Leonhart destroyed himself! The worst counsel could not have made matters worse, nor could the best have improved them."

"All the same, Leonhart gave Anna Jahn a free hand to choose the lawyer whom she thought the best."

"Well then, she considered Volland the best."

"Very good, sir, but one soon saw what kind of man he was."

"Others offered their services. It is for the accused to select his counsel; he ought to have known from the first that he was not in good hands."

"Sir, he did not care."

"Did not care! How could anyone not care when his head is in the noose?"

"Well, sir! If a man is innocent and does not see any possibility of proving his innocence, then he doesn't care what sort of sophistries a pettifogging lawyer may trot out. In such a case the Lord himself would have had to plead for him, and who knows whether even that would have been enough!"

For a full minute there was silence. It was a heavy silence, pregnant with thought. Maurizius's body swayed a little, like the top of a tree in a stiff breeze. He cast a timid glance at the attorney-general. Something is going on in that man's mind, he thought, and his heart ceased to beat for a moment. Herr von Andergast stroked one side of his face with the four fingers of his right hand, and the other side with his thumb. It gave him a curious, sensuous pleasure to feel the skin of his cheeks. Innocent! he thought, and expanded his lungs in impenitent pride: innocent! A crazy and impertinent word when the law and the court have spoken. Innocent, when the criminal has been found guilty and is still expiating his crime, and human and divine justice is being done! Innocent! It was as though the old man had thrown a stone at his breast. But Maurizius had seen truly: something was happening in his mind. There was one means of making his conviction still more impregnable than it was already. He could see with his own eyes: to do so lay within his power. He could inform himself as to how this

Leonhart Maurizius was bearing the fate inflicted upon him. It was not impossible that, if confronted, Leonhart would break his eighteen years of silence; that he would unburden his soul, become submissive and confess. Such a triumph would be worth some trouble. . . . This was what was passing in Herr von Andergast's mind, and what the old man, the creature of hopes and delusions, had felt by some mysterious process of psychical transference.

"Do you by any chance remember of what you and Leonhart spoke on that October evening when he came to see you for the last time?"

Maurizius shook his head; not because he was answering the question in the negative; it was only that he was surprised that anyone should suppose that in this affair it was possible that he should not remember the slightest detail. At the same time a grey veil seemed to pass over his face. The man behind the desk knew how to take aim and hit the mark. Now at last he had laid aside that devilish pencil, but to make up for that he was looking at one with those blue eyes of his as though he was inviting one to walk right into them. Good Lord, how blue the man's eyes were! it was as though everything which had taken place "at that time" was mirrored in them. He snatched at one of the horn buttons of his jacket and twisted it convulsively. It was superfluous to describe how the boy had stuffed him with lies, with outrageous lies; he only hinted at this, with bowed head. The lie about the research work abroad for the Government; the lie about the twelve hundred marks which he would have been paid for his last piece of work, if the publisher had not gone bankrupt; the lie about Herr von Krupp's asking him to give his opinion on a disputed Dutch painting. And lastly, the lie that he had intended to come next day to say good-bye, but that someone in Wiesbaden had told him that his father was ill, whereupon he had asked Count Hatzfeld to lend him his motor. He had not been in Wiesbaden at all; and a jeweller's motor had not been good enough for him, it had to be a count's. What pitiful lies! They never had two legs to stand on. Ill? He?

No, Peter Paul Maurizius took good care not to be ill, at that time, when he was waiting for his turn to come, just as he took care not to be ill now, when more than ever he was waiting for his turn to come. To think of all those stupid pitiful little lies, which simply meant: "Just look at me, see what a fine fellow I am, how I am respected, see how I have got on in the world; you may well be proud of me!" If only his face alone had not given his lies the lie! He looked as though he had been drinking and whoring for half the week, or as though he had been dragged out of a burning house and was still trembling with the shock.

The bone button was twisted off. Maurizius held it in his hand, looked at it with surprise, and let it slip into his pocket. He had told his tale in a monotonous and all but incomprehensible murmur. Now he took two steps into the room, as though for what he had now resolved to say he must be nearer to his listener. "I dare say he had expected I should overwhelm him with questions and coax him. He may have thought that after all that time . . . well, it was like this, sir . . . it was because of his marriage . . . there was no friendship between us any more; it was all over between us; his name might as well have been Leonhart Schulze. I expect he thought that when he came of his own accord, in the night, and sat in front of me there, talking as though he were ripe for the madhouse, that I should give him my hand. That was it, your worship. And that I did not do. I saw which way the wind was blowing, but I did nothing of the sort. And that, sir, that remains a load on my conscience. And that will be reckoned against me. Men are rogues. When a man does not want to do a thing, and puts his back up, he becomes a rogue. Right away. For what was at stake, I ask you?" (He moved a step nearer, and pressed his open hand upon his head; his huge naked-looking ears flushed blood-red.) "Two thousand marks. Put it at three thousand. If I had given him the money, if I hadn't in my shabby pride insisted, not only that he should humiliate himself before me—for that he did in the end—but that I should be admitted to be in the right in the business with Elli; if I had got the better of myself and given him two or three

thousand marks—and I could have managed it—then, as sure as that I'm standing here now, everything would have turned out differently. Then he would have freed himself for a time; he wouldn't have gone back to his accursed house with despair in his heart; he wouldn't have run into the snare like a blind bird. Then he would have seen what was going on about him, he would have been able to protect himself. That is the story, sir. It was his life that was at stake that night, and his life was not worth even three thousand marks to me. Think what a life is worth. Think, honoured sir, how precious a life is. Can its value be calculated? It is without price, just as heaven is without price, and for me three thousand marks was too dear." He whipped his hand away from his head, and bending forward, flung it with a crash on the desk, under Herr von Andergast's eyes, as though it had been a manifest witness and a sacrifice. And when Herr von Andergast looked up he saw that tears were pouring over the weather-beaten face.

He started to his feet, strode across the room, and halted by the window. "You see matters in a false light," he said, in a broken voice, and without turning his face from the window. "You have twisted the facts; all this has nothing to do with reality."

"I don't know what that is, the reality," replied the old man, darkly. Then, after a period of silent brooding, with bowed head and downcast eyes: "Your worship, do help me." Herr von Andergast turned round and went up to him. The old man's forehead reached exactly to his shoulder, and Andergast observed the red wen with disgust.

"What have you done with the boy, with my son?" he asked sharply. Maurizius blinked and seemed to withdraw into himself.

"The boy came to me of his own accord," he said, after a long silence. "Afterwards, it always seemed to me as though I had simply been dreaming. All my life I have never seen any visions or so-called apparitions. I have really been a dead man for eighteen years; go as deep as you like, where is there a spark of life left in me? But what I mean is . . . this is what I wanted to

say: 'To me the boy seemed like an apparition. One can't express in ordinary words what there is about that boy. Well, then, we had some conversation, two or three times, I believe. He was interested in the case. Read everything I gave him, all the material. One day I got the whole lot back, with a note. The note ran: 'I am going away now; I must have a talk with Gregor Waremmé; when I come back we shall know one way or the other.' Not another word. Well, I did laugh. Or no, I didn't really laugh. You angel, I thought, you angelic little fool. And it was a wonderful feeling I had, as though the mills of God were grinding at last."

Herr von Andergast returned to the window. He stood like a black battering-ram against the rectangle of light.

"You do not know where he is?"

"I don't know, and I'd rather not say what I think about it."

"Why not?"

"It's a superstition, your worship."

"He has not written to you since then?"

"No, sir."

"And you know . . . or do you not know where this Waremmé is?"

"May I ask, sir, whether that is an official or a personal question?"

"It is . . . for the present . . . a personal question."

"Then, sir, since I have this superstition, I should like, with your permission, to leave the question unanswered for the present."

"Very well."

This was a dismissal. But Maurizius did not move. Herr von Andergast, with the look of suppressed aversion that was peculiar to him, an expression that might conceal emotions which he would never allow to force their way to the surface, interjected hastily: "So far as the other matter is concerned, I advise you not to have any great hopes. We shall see."

The old man raised his eyes with an expression of terrified delight. "Of course . . . I . . . that goes without saying. . . . What

could one hope for, under the most favourable conditions?" he stammered hoarsely.

"Under the most favourable conditions? . . . One might propose the pardon for which you have asked. . . ." The silence in which the old man moved away had something spectral about it. Perhaps he was afraid that the words might be taken back if he were to call any further attention to himself.

As Herr von Andergast walked down the monumental stone staircase fifteen minutes later, shivering and buttoning his cloak, he felt as though he were walking through a vast sea-shell, whose roaring afflicted his ears. The landings and the stairs were already deserted, but the air was vibrant with departed steps and voices. Behind the walls the clerks were sitting, bent over deeds and decrees, writing. With their pens they were intervening in human destinies, but their expressions were as indifferent as though they had merely been ordered to transfer a certain quantity of ink to a certain quantity of paper. There was a slamming of doors, a shrilling of electric bells; peremptory voices were dictating to machines, or shouting into telephones. Indictments were being made, oaths were being sworn, verdicts were being delivered and laws were being interpreted. It was an organic whole, in which all were functioning obediently and conscientiously: referendars, assessors, attorneys, solicitors, registrars, advocates, judges: a respectable hierarchy, which can only with a shudder surmise the apex of the whole and its dominating spirit. But did they surmise it, were those within the shell conscious of it? Did they shudder at it? That was the question. After all, the shell seems to hold the ocean within it if one holds one's ear to it, but the eternal organ-tones of the ocean are only a delusion, for the shell roars merely because it is empty.

PART TWO
INTERREGNUM

CHAPTER VIII

I

ETZEL had no need to fear pursuit during the journey. He knew that his father would not return from his circuit until Thursday; by that time he would be in Berlin. The only question was: what then? Where could he find shelter, where could he hide himself? He did not deceive himself into thinking that his father would grant the request which he had made in his farewell letter: not to have him pursued. Yet he must have a free hand, and be able to move about as circumstances required; otherwise the whole enterprise would come to naught. At any hotel, any pension, any inn, he must register in accordance with the regulations. To register under a false name would probably be useless, since, if they were looking for him, the police would have a description of his person; and they were skilled in such matters. He had no acquaintances in Berlin, not a soul to whom he could apply, except perhaps, perhaps (a timorous sigh accompanied the thought), Melchior Ghisels. However, he might take it that a Melchior Ghisels could not be expected to trouble his head about such sordid matters, even if he were to be bothered with an Etzel Andergast. Where should he go? This was a worrying business.

Chance came to his aid. As he sat upright in a corner of the compartment, weighing the difficulties, which, as the hours went by, seemed more and more insuperable, his glance fell on a woman of some forty-five or fifty years, who was sitting opposite him, and had been looking at him for some time with a sort of mockery. Absorbed in his own thoughts, he had paid little attention to his fellow-passengers. The carriage was fairly full; all sorts of lower-middle class folk were travelling: commercials and small tradespeople, women, girls and children; only at Cassel did the seats begin to empty, and until they came to Hanover few new passengers got in. The woman, however, remained, and suddenly began to talk to Etzel. She was uneducated, garrulous, and fairly good-natured; at the same time,

her face had an expression which one often sees in women of her class, something worn and harassed, which reminds one of a horse that has fallen on the highway, and lies there with a stubborn, questioning pain in its eyes. After the first few words he knew her name, and her family circumstances and financial position were not long in following. Her name was Schneevogt; her husband was a book-keeper in a warehouse; her nineteen-year-old daughter Melitta was in business too; her flat was in Anklamerstrasse, in the north of Berlin, and consisted of three large rooms and two small ones, which latter she let to single gentlemen. She explained that she was returning from Mannheim, where she had buried her brother, her only brother. He had got on in life; he had been a bookbinder, and an expert chess-player, and the secretary of a choral society. When she had gone there she had hoped to inherit something, at least a little something, but the hope had been vain; there wasn't a thing left, nothing but broken-down furniture and debts. It was so hard to get on; she had secretly hoped for some assistance from the dear departed; it was such an accursed struggle, and not a ray of hope in sight. Her husband was always ailing, and as for his salary, Lord knew it was only enough to keep them from starving; no one would have thought when he was a baby that when he was fifty-seven he would have to live on herring and potatoes. He was a clever man, but he was too respectable; you couldn't get on like that nowadays; Melitta gave them the greater part of her monthly wages, but you couldn't do much out of seventy marks; and a girl like that wanted a little fun, too; and so on, and so on. She ran on like a waterfall, without a break, in a shrill, monotonous voice; and it seemed as though Etzel was not only expected to have compassion and understanding for all her misfortune, but also that he was partly to blame for it. Misfortune, for such people, is exclusively the result of guilt; never one's own, but that either of the community, which has not adequately appreciated the gifts and services of the bewildered ego, or that of certain individuals, who at critical moments have failed them out of malice, weakness or stupidity. She could not

indulge sufficiently in embittered reminiscences, in comparisons with the lot of this or that acquaintance, in contemptuous comments on the inefficiency of a certain Herr Schmitz (even though he *had* become a factory-manager) or the shortcomings of a Frau Hennings, the daughter of a cobbler, and who, "as true as I sit here", once used to sew children's shirts in the Marienburgerstrasse, in the very worst part, and had now a villa in Grunewald, and went rushing about in a motor-car. If, for example, the dead man had had any gumption, if he had seized the opportunity and had sold his business three years ago, where would she, Frau Schneevogt, have been now? Now wasn't that a shame? It was enough to make you scream at the thought of it!—And she herself was really all but screaming; she leant over to Etzel and glared at him reproachfully and threateningly. He nodded. He was entirely of her opinion. He considered that the Schneevogt family were far more worthy of riding in a motor-car, of living in Grunewald, than Frau Hennings, who had sewn children's shirts, and that the dead bookbinder had been guilty of an unpardonable sin of omission. Full of frank sympathy, he gazed into the woman's face, ready for every concession which she might demand of him; prepared to admit that Herr Schneevogt was a genius of business enterprise; that Melitta, who, in spite of her charming voice, had not as yet been engaged by any theatrical agent or director, was a great singer, and that Frau Schneevogt herself was a quite unique example of female virtue and ability. The good woman was greatly elated by his understanding. She took him into her favour. When presently she extracted half a dozen sandwiches from a greasy parcel, she invited him to share them. Her hands were dry, worn and tremulous. They interested him. He said to himself: Those must be avaricious hands. He gave her all the more credit for the sandwiches, of which he ate two. He noticed that the woman ate greedily, but without enjoyment. Her eyes were set close together, and had a shifty look. Her face could never have been pretty; and now it was worn with worry, greed and discontent. Under these emotions there slumbered

an almost incredibly high estimate of her own person. If things don't go well with me, she seemed to say, with whom should they go well? Etzel made use of the pause that accompanied the eating of the sandwiches to hint cautiously at his dilemma. He was looking for lodgings; the price was not the important factor, although he wasn't precisely a Cræsus; but he must keep out of sight for a few weeks. Family unpleasantness had driven him from home; he must wait until everything had settled down again; meanwhile he had accepted a job as private secretary; his name was Mohl, if he might introduce himself, Edgar Mohl. Why he had chosen the name of a school-fellow, and in particular that of the fat gluttonous Mohl, was a puzzle to himself. But it was clever of him not to call himself Klaus; it occurred to him at that moment that his linen was marked with an E. The whole thing was a sudden inspiration.

Frau Schneevogt looked him over with narrowed eyes. Now that they were talking business she was for the time being more reserved. Her glance appraised him: his character, his antecedents, his means. The result seemed to satisfy her. A nice boy, an honest face, presumably of good family. A promising affair. Both the small rooms were at present unoccupied. During the winter two mechanics from the Borsig works had occupied them; both splendid fellows. She took boarders only: breakfast and one other meal, midday or evening. Etzel's remark about wanting to keep out of sight probably meant that he didn't want to register? There was a serious fine for that, as he probably knew; the police were very nasty about that sort of thing. But when Etzel suggested that in view of this difficulty he might perhaps pay a little extra, she interrupted him hastily, as though she did not want to make any undue demands, saying: "Oh, well, we can talk about that; at all events come along and look at the place. It will be midnight before we get in, but you can sleep as late as you please to-morrow." He for his part was thinking: what luck! They'll never run me to earth in the house of the book-keeper Schneevogt in Anklamer-strasse; to do that they would have to make a house-to-house search.

He was content. The train was roaring through silver-grey mists; the horizonless plain was like a foam-covered sea. But it was spring; everything was strange and therefore inviting; even the slight fear that was awake in his breast, the fear of the world and of human beings, quickened his blood not unpleasantly.

2

The room which he was given opened into a dark court; it was five yards long and three wide; the furniture comprised a narrow bed with a straw mattress and a woollen counterpane, a rusty iron stove, a shaky chest of drawers with only three legs, a round tin washstand with a basin the size of a shaving-bowl, a wooden table, and two straw-bottomed chairs. On the grey distempered wall hung a gaudy oleograph of the battle of Vionville, and on the wall beside the bed there were suspicious blood-spots, which Etzel observed questioningly for a while, until it occurred to him that they pointed to a colony of bugs. He had never seen a bug. From the ceiling hung a gas-jet, with an incandescent burner and a mica chimney. The single window had no curtain, and one could see into the opposite tenement, which seemed to have innumerable inmates; fresh faces were constantly flashing past the windows. It certainly is not pretty here, thought Etzel, as he unstrapped his rucksack; but that needn't matter to me. I am not here for pretty things. The worst thing about the room was that it had no entrance of its own; in order to reach it one had to go through the daughter's bedroom. The bed, indeed, was hidden by a flimsy curtain, but the situation embarrassed Etzel. It doesn't matter, he said to himself; that's how things are; it would be better if they were different; but they aren't.

Frau Schneevogt hesitated a long while before fixing the terms; she had to make calculations, and consult her husband; as far as meals were concerned she could estimate the cost exactly; he must of course realize that even if he wasn't in for a meal he would have nevertheless to pay for it; it was a long-winded discourse, winding up with a hymn in praise of her own honesty. At last she came out with the figures: sixty marks a month for

board and lodging, seven marks fifty for service, light and laundry. Etzel did not think of bargaining; he counted out sixty-seven marks fifty of his capital and brought it to her, with a promptitude which gave her a high opinion of him. From that moment she regarded him as "a real gentleman", but she was, at the same time, the victim of conflicting emotions; on the one hand she took him, with a certain rough affection, into her withered heart, because he was so alone in the world; on the other hand she regretted that she hadn't asked for more, and considered what she could still get out of him; moreover, she scented a secret, the discovery of which might not only yield a tangible profit, but might also transform her whole existence. One may often observe in life that it is always the inferior natures which are prone to look for fantastic experiences and build castles in the air; sympathy and self-interest are like two unequal sisters, who would like to live amicably together, but do not know how. Frau Schneevogt, of course, searched through all his belongings, but she found nothing to enlighten her. He had been on his guard, and had himself examined every scrap of paper, and the fly-leaf of every book. Fortunately, she had no method in her spying, and her mind retained nothing but her daily troubles. She was always quarrelling with the other inmates of the house, with her husband and her daughter, with the police and the Government, and with heaven itself. When she was able to get hold of Etzel she overwhelmed him with complaints: how cruel fate had been to her, and how kind to others! The end of it all was an outburst of tears and a little bill of forty pfennigs for the repair of the lock and eighty pfennigs for a new water-bottle, the old one having got cracked (about which he knew nothing). He never contradicted her, but pulled out his purse and paid the money. A quiver of pleasure always passed over her face when she felt the money in her poor bony hands, whether the sum were forty pfennigs, or, as on the first occasion, six ten-mark bills and some silver. Etzel was never tired of watching those hands, and the fumbling play of the clutching fingers; it fascinated him, like the behaviour of hungry beasts of prey when

food is pushed into their cages. He wished he had enough money to satisfy the greed of those hands, just in order that they might lie down and rest. But in all probability he would never have so much money, would never earn so much; and at night, when he lay awake thinking of Waremmé (he often woke up at night, for, as he was soon to learn, there was a dancing-school in the house opposite, and a horrible mechanical piano played there until two in the morning), his thoughts would turn to Frau Schneevogt, and he would ask himself whether her hands were quiet at least while she slept.

The light from the dancing-school across the courtyard shone into his room, so the second night he hung his overcoat across the window; but even after that he could not go to sleep for a long time, because the bugs were tormenting him. . . . Sleep, half-sleep, waking; dream, half-dream, half-waking; he was continually passing from one to the other. What shall I do? he would think. What is wisest, what is safest; how shall I set about it? To make a beginning: that meant that he believed in his success; and he believed in his success because he must. Only in his most despondent moments, at times when he was half sleeping, half dreaming, when there was no ray of light in the world outside, not even in the dancing-school, did he have any doubts; and once the idea struck him like a blow in the face: What if the man were dead? Suppose he had died, yesterday, or last week? Then he would stand like an ox before a new gateway, unable to go through. But when he considered the matter clearly he decided that this could not be. For in that case, he told himself, the law within him would be annulled; he would be a minus quantity in the scheme of creation; for there is a deeper truth in all things than we can perceive or grasp; and how could Waremmé be dead since Maurizius was still in prison? That was what kept spurring him on; the thought that he could never conceive quite clearly; the thought of the man in prison; the thought that every day that passed here for Etzel was one day more for him too, and that one could not be in too much of a hurry to make an end of the situation, so that the world

might cease to be a disfigured and crippled thing, a running sore which it made one sick and ill to look at.

The next day he went to Usedomstrasse, at the corner of Jasmunderstrasse, and climbed up to the first floor; on the balustrade hung a placard on which was written in large black letters: *Mathilde Bobike, lunch, per week four marks fifty*. It was one of those houses into which no fresh air had penetrated for years, filled from hall to garret with the smell of roast mutton, boiled cabbage, baby-linen, leather and dish-water. He asked to see Frau Bobike, and there at once appeared a lady, six feet high, with bony features and iron-grey hair, who stared down at him in silence. After he had explained that he wanted to lunch there for a month she handed him a bill, and he paid eighteen marks, whereupon she, still silent, gave him a small book of four leaves, each of which consisted of seven meal-tickets.

3

A sacred resolve to do some certain thing will illumine the mind even of a child. But Etzel was a child only in stature and in years; moreover, the word "child", when applied to a youth of sixteen, is merely an expression of embarrassment on the part of those who lost their childhood the day after it ended. Such people point to the lack of experience of the young, although their own experience is no more than a pitiful mosaic; no clear picture, but rather a laborious sum of insignificant quantities which seldom yields a total, since only the few are capable of real experience; for there is no sap in them; the tree bears only hard and shrivelled fruit, because their hearts are incapable of remembering. It is the idea of life that makes man creative, his innate, eternal idea, which he creates out of himself. Then youth is only an interval, and what it lacks in retrospect and the accumulation of comparisons is made up for by its inner life and its passionate interest in the present. Resolved to undertake the seemingly impossible, Etzel first made a fearless survey of the world into which he had entered. The eating-house of Mathilde Bobike flourished under the title of "Lunch Pension

for Ladies and Gentlemen". This meant that between twelve and one o'clock, in a large, musty, barn-like apartment, and two smaller adjoining rooms, there were assembled from thirty to forty individuals of doubtful character; people who had stumbled and failed, who were tired of swimming against the tide; persons of shabby elegance and badly disguised poverty; travellers out of work; strolling musicians; actors and actresses from the suburbs who were resting; financial agents who were about to attempt a risky venture, or who had just failed to "bring it off"; bar-tenders and professional dancers from the surrounding pleasure-resorts; people from the provinces, who had come to the capital as a last hope, and were now stranded like wrecks on a sand-bank; a political suspect or two; a wife who had run away from home; and a young girl, the daughter of a country pastor, who wanted to act for the cinema. Etzel, from the very first, made a point of offending no one, and of winning favour by his pleasant, confiding, and modestly communicative manner. He quickly made friends with his neighbours at table, and between the potato soup and the vegetable pudding engaged them in a conversation which greatly increased his knowledge of the outer fringes of society. They at once began to talk of an embezzlement which someone had committed (even his name was mentioned with a wink), and how with a little cunning one could slip through all the meshes of the law. They spoke of a certain man, Cabaret Erich, a pianist in the Victoria Café, who had run off with the wife of the proprietor, and four thousand marks into the bargain. They spoke of him with a mixture of admiration and envy, as Etzel had heard people speak hitherto only of a great artistic achievement, or perhaps an athletic record. Behind him some people were discussing the stock-market; at a table on the left a consumptive painter was explaining how much money was being made nowadays by forging Old Masters; on the right there was a lively discussion as to the amount of the bribe which a housing commissioner had accepted on a certain occasion. He listened with interest, eager to learn, with the smile of a beginner who is taking a lesson, for everything depended on

secrecy; he would if he could have hidden from his own self, as though association with himself were a criminal offence, as though one ought not to feel or know anything about oneself under such circumstances as those in which he was placed. He was, after all, a twofold personality, Edgar Mohl and Etzel Andergast; and in order to derive a little amusement from his exacting task he played at being two persons, inciting the one against the other, pitting one against the other; but Etzel Andergast, the real person, became ever more remote, whereas Edgar Mohl, the shadow, assumed an ostentatious reality, and refused to permit any interference with his perilous courses.

He had already, more than once, taken a covert though searching glance about him; but it seemed to him that there was no one among the guests who could be the man whom he was seeking with such tense eagerness. It was already a quarter to one, and most of the lunchers had already finished, when a man entered whose appearance left him no further doubt. He was a man of medium height, wearing a long, grey, old-fashioned frock-coat, grey baggy trousers, and a rather shabby satin waist-coat patterned with blue flowers. His gait was careless, slow and heavy. He took a few steps into the room before he removed his broad-rimmed felt hat, revealing a head covered with a few wisps of iron-grey hair, a head so massive that from that moment he looked a good five inches taller. His eyes, and their expression, were completely concealed by a pair of dark glasses, and these black circular spots threw the deathly whiteness of the massive, heavily lined, beardless, flaccid face into such sharp relief that it looked like an artificial mask, painted white for the purpose of arousing terror. Etzel involuntarily bent his head over his plate. He felt as though something acrid had been poured into his throat, and he had to swallow hard several times. He dared only to take a few furtive glances, but he felt the man weighing upon him like a monstrous burden. Most of the people knew him; some nodded to him as he walked to his table, for he ate alone, and had even been given a table-cloth; others said: "Morning, Professor"; for he was generally known as "the

Professor", even by people in the street who knew him only by sight.

4

A week from to-day, Etzel decided, I shall speak to him, unless some good opportunity should occur sooner. But there was small hope of that, for "the Professor" spoke to no one. Even when the tables were crowded, and one could scarcely hear one's own voice, he would sit at his separate table, taking no part in the conversation, reading a book which he fished out of the back pocket of his ridiculous frock-coat and held open beside his plate. He seemed to see no one, and not to overhear what was being said.

I shall speak to him, Etzel decided, and ask him to give me English lessons. This, it would seem, was not so particularly venturesome, since it was generally known that it was the man's calling to give lessons and to take pupils. Nevertheless, Etzel was glad that he had some time ahead of him. The blood ran to his head and his heart beat like a trip-hammer when he thought of encountering the man, of finding himself in his presence. It was not cowardice; it was only that he had become shudderingly aware of the tremendous task which he had undertaken; and when he had realized it completely, to the very tips of his fingers and the depths of his soul, he smiled, feeling rather like a man standing on the roof of a burning house, measuring the distance which he is bound to leap, and marking the spot on which he must without fail alight, if he does not want to break his neck. He must indeed be a good jumper, and something of a magician besides.

Meanwhile he made good use of the interval which he had allowed himself. His plan was to make himself popular at the Bobike eating-house; to make himself known to everyone as a good-natured fellow, and to do people trifling services. He wanted all to feel that he was one of them; he must seem a bright, cheery sort of youth, and contribute all sorts of non-sensical remarks to the general conversation, thereby unobtru-

sively compelling "the Professor" to notice him and form a definite opinion of him, which would assist him in the furtherance of his plan; he wanted "the Professor" to regard him as a good-natured, clever boy, worthy of confidence, but needing guidance, and serviceable in all sorts of ways. He soon saw that "the Professor" lived quite a solitary life (to himself Etzel always called him Waremmé; for him the name Warschauer did not exist); he had apparently no friends or relations; but Etzel told himself, not without reason, that there was no human life so circumscribed that one could not find access to it, if one were sufficiently clever and adroit. It was not enough merely to offer himself as a pupil; it would be better that the man should first have a favourable impression of him. Once more he posed as a private secretary; and further, he invented the tale of an uncle, his guardian and his only relative, who had brought him up, and had administered the small capital which he had inherited. This man had absconded with Etzel's money. Etzel had been looking for him for some weeks; he had reliable information that he was in Berlin, and indeed in this neighbourhood. This sensational tale was accepted in good faith; it was perfectly adapted to the environment. Etzel knew how to emphasize his effects by reticence; he had the gift of convincing people by a word. He made them all understand that he had everyone's interests at heart, so they gave him what he modestly demanded for himself: liking, and the admission that he was rather a nice young fellow. His laughing eyes placated even the coarsest oaf. His charm was of a popular kind. When he wished he could make people laugh at the disconsolate gesture with which he pulled his cap down over his forehead. Travellers in rubber goods and strolling players are not people who practise much social reserve; the out-of-work artisan whom one saw at the window of the grocer's down below, looking longingly at a tin of tunny, and then buying ten pfennigs' worth of cheese for his supper, was glad enough if anyone would speak to him. What these people liked about him was his dry matter-of-fact manner. If he was talking to a cocaine addict he seemed surprised that everyone

did not take cocaine; if he was dealing with a drunkard it seemed as though he admired the man's capacity for drink, and regarded him with a certain kindness, as though drunkenness were the most natural thing in the world. One day a youth with rouge on his face made affectionate advances to him; when he understood what was intended he promised to consider the matter. When he was most profoundly moved he could look like a buffoon; when he was dealing with an angry man he would look like a nursemaid whose duty it was to soothe a crying child. No degeneracy astonished him; no baseness offended him; he was disgusted by no vice, and it is probable that even the spectacle of crime would not have altered a line of his peacefully smiling face; to such an extent was he able to control himself. He was like a man playing a game behind his own back, and although he was suspicious of everything romantic, and dismissed all dreams with contempt, yet in all this, I think, something akin to them appeared, some vestiges of them, even though it often assumed the form of reaction. For at heart he was the same Etzel whom his grandmother had found, when he was three years of age, sitting on a rug and trying to eat a ray of sunshine with a spoon, and who, when he realized that he was being watched, threw the spoon into the coal-scuttle in his angry embarrassment.

What was the name of the uncle who had absconded, they asked him? Mohl was his name: the same as his own. Ah! Mohl? A cigar dealer in the Matthäuskeller had heard of a Mohl. Someone else recommended him to the so-called "Half-Silk", an habitué of the Marburger Loch; he was a walking information-bureau: in all Wedding there was not a soul whom he did not know, and whose history he could not reel off. A third adviser, a man with a saffron-yellow complexion and a scar over the left eye, who was supposed to have been something in the navy, recommended him to make inquiries at some of the dance-halls, at the Wintergarten, and of the various book-makers; but in ninety per cent. of such cases he would find his man, sooner or later, in a certain coffee-house near the Alex-

anderplatz. Further, he told Etzel of several hostelrys in the Oranienburger, Elsässer and Lothringer Strasse, where people commonly lodged who wanted to "make themselves scarce", passing quickly from one to the other when danger threatened. As he explained to the silent and respectful listeners at his table, one must know how to distinguish between respectable, semi-respectable, lower-middle class, and proletarian places of refuge; one must know the difference between a lodging-house, a night-shelter, and a cellar. The man who was under police surveillance would naturally select a different place from the man who was wanted for a crime; you could dredge for the former in moderate depths; for the latter one must look deeper. A fellow who simply wanted to disappear for a time did not, as a rule, go very far below the surface, even if he was sailing under false colours; which would have to be expected in the case of Uncle Mohl. Sometimes you would get what you wanted soonest by inquiring of the ladies (and here he bleated out a quotation from Goethe's *Iphigenie*: "Ask it of noble women only"); recently he had caught a fellow for whom he had been fishing a long while in vain by going to the clairvoyante Salome in Landsberger Strasse. Etzel thanked the speaker effusively for his exhaustive information, and rather than hide his own light under a bushel he developed, before the admiring audience, who after this remarkable feat regarded him as a "brilliant young fellow", a sort of popular philosophy of the social groupings, showing that since people were so closely pushed together in certain strata, and were constantly passing up or down into the adjacent strata, everyone was acquainted with everybody. Every tailor knew twenty tailors, every retail trader twenty others; there were trades which might be regarded as sister trades, or cousin trades; the locksmith knew the bicycle-dealer; the glazier knew the builder; the office manager had charge of a couple of dozen clerks; a waiter served two hundred guests a day, and knew not only the names of many, but also their private affairs; the shop-girl was interested in her customers, and knew who most of them were, and what they did; taxi-drivers knew the people who lived near

their cab-ranks; while 'bus and tram conductors knew their morning, noon and evening passengers. Most people walked through the same streets at the same hours; it was not a question of how many "acquaintances" a person had, whether the professor, the member of parliament, or the manufacturer had two thousand, and the poor student, the beggar, the petty clerk, or the man just out of prison only fifty, or even ten; for everyone was surrounded by acquaintances, and on every rung of the ladder of life there was an "acquaintance" to introduce one to an acquaintance on the next rung. Everyone belonged to his own destined "union".

Young people, when they think that they have something clever to say, are fond of talking to the gallery. Etzel was fairly free from this form of vanity. He had a different motive for raising his voice and compelling his audience to listen in silence; he simply wanted "the Professor" to hear him, and while he was talking he watched Waremme-Warschauer like a lynx. He could not see his face or his expression clearly, because of his short-sightedness, but it seemed to him that the man had interrupted his reading in order to listen, and at the end of his dissertation he noticed that "the Professor" had turned his head a little, as though he wanted to have a look at him, and was grinding his overgrown jaw to and fro in a singular manner. It looked just as though he was trying to defend himself against a wasp, but was too lazy to lift his hand. Now he knows my voice, thought Etzel; now I am almost "an acquaintance" of his.

5

It was not only that his table-companions asked Etzel to do all sorts of errands for them (for example, on his way home would he go by way of the Linienkeller, and give a gentleman who was waiting there, and whose appearance was described, a certain message; or would he tell Fräulein Else Grunau, 27 Gollnowstrasse, that Heinrich Balle could not call for her that evening; or would he go out to the Sports Palace—here was the money for the underground—and get someone to send for sprinter

Paul, and tell him that if he didn't send what he knew by four o'clock that afternoon he would have Christoph Jansen to deal with?), but even Frau Bobike herself entrusted him with occasional errands, such as warning someone who had failed to pay her, or putting off some butcher or grocer whom she had failed to pay; or she would ask him to tell a young lady who two years previously had bought a gramophone on the instalment plan, and was now ill in hospital, that she must return the instrument, because she had not kept to her bargain—there were two more instalments to be paid. Or there was a pair of corsets which must go back for alteration; a bottle of benzine was wanted from the chemist's, or an address from the registry office; he was to inquire for divinity student Klapprot at the Schönhauser Gate; and other errands of the sort. He did them all willingly. He was always in the best of spirits. He went wherever he was sent. He seldom used a conveyance; firstly, because he wanted to save, and secondly, because he was fascinated by all that he saw when he went on foot. He would go from the crowded parts of the city, where innumerable people coldly and irritably pushed past one another, into the deserted quarters, where gasworks, prisons, hospitals, factories and graveyards made one feel as though one were in a torture-chamber, full of gigantic instruments of torture, with dungeons and graves already yawning close at hand. He stood in rooms where the moisture trickled down the walls, and in cellar-tenements which were lit in the evening by candles stuck into the necks of bottles, and where someone always lay sick of a fever on a rag-covered sofa. He saw children with wrinkled faces who perhaps had never yet seen a tree or a meadow, and when he spoke to one of them it was as though he were laughing at himself because he was not equally starved and neglected. Once, in front of a Salvation Army headquarters, he had to force his way through a mob of homeless and unemployed persons, and he passed through this horribly silent company as innocently as though he were walking across a playground among his school-fellows. Fräulein Else Grunau, whom we have mentioned, took a liking to him, and it required all his shrewd-

ness and innocent volubility to slip out of the net. Nothing really mattered, nothing was worth looking at, so long as that man was in prison. This thought was inexorable as time, turning the hours into millstones, under whose grinding the life of the world was expiring with a sigh.

He got up daily at seven, left the house at eight, and did not return until six or seven in the evening, and sometimes later, for he had to keep up the fiction of his employment as a secretary. He was, of course, asked for whom he was working; for an author who lived in the Kastanienallee, he said, giving a name which he had invented. This was careless of him, for Melitta Schneevogt conceived the Schneevogtish notion of looking in the directory, and one day she asked him sarcastically how his employer was. He understood her. I mustn't blush, he thought, replying boldly that the name was a pseudonym.

"Are you a political, or perhaps a spy?" the girl asked, frowningly. "If so, get out of here before we get into a mess with the police!" No, he had nothing to do with politics, he replied, with a disarming smile, withdrawing from the sight of this unamiable young woman. How did he pass the time, from early morning until it was lunch-time at Frau Bobike's, and from half-past one until the evening?—for the errands which he ran were always quickly disposed of. He simply walked and walked. He had brought two pairs of shoes with him; after a week the soles of one pair were so worn, and the heels of the other were so crooked, that both had to be repaired. His feet were in worse case; they were sore and covered with blisters, and only gradually did they harden and become calloused. Since it was always midnight before he crept up to bed, only to lie awake in a losing battle with the bugs, this mode of life must have ruined his health had he not been as tense as a coiled spring. He walked and walked, puzzling and pondering, recollecting himself, looking about him, and walking on again. When he was tired he would sit down on a bench in front of the public hospital, or in the Humboldt Park, or if it rained he would seek refuge in one of the many railway-stations. Sometimes he would take a Greek or

Latin text from his pocket and study it; sometimes he would repeat aloud such poems as he knew by heart—verses of Rilke's or George's; sometimes he would read a volume of Melchior Ghisels'. But it had suddenly become distressing to know that there was no longer a disembodied spirit behind the book, but a tangible person whom, if he wished, he might see that very day; he might even speak to him. But he thought of a visit to Ghisels as a pious Catholic thinks of a pilgrimage; to "determine" to pay it was not enough; it must be like a flight without any effort of will, as though he were borne thither by one of the elements; only thus could he overcome his dread of the visit, the stage-fright of love; for the eye of such a man was surely like the eye of heaven itself.

Among the patrons of Frau Bobike's table there was a down-and-out student named Schirmer. He had for a time been an assistant-master at one of the non-sectarian schools, but he had been dismissed on account of a scandal, and now he was looking for a source of livelihood. He had begun to take his meals at Frau Bobike's on the same day as Etzel, and he sat at the same table. He was a fair, undersized man, who drank a good deal, and did not look over-intelligent. The brown stubble of his beard gave him a grimy appearance. He was wildly enthusiastic about "little Mohl," as they all called him, and when Etzel made one of his dry remarks, enlarging on the state of things in general, or gave an exhibition of his powers of mimicry—imitating, for example, a 'bus-conductor in a bad temper, or a stuttering newspaper-seller—Schirmer would howl with laughter, bang his fist on the table, and look triumphantly round the room as though asking for applause. After such a paroxysm he would wipe the tears from his eyes with an enormous blue handkerchief. One day, when Etzel had been lunching at the house for just a week, Schirmer, who was talking to the naval artificer, somewhat complacently brought forth a Latin quotation. Etzel laughed, and added the second line of the couplet. It was from Horace; it was quite amusing under the circumstances, and was, of course, comprehensible only to the student and himself. Schirmer

was overcome by the usual paroxysm of delight; then he said: "Mohl, it seems to me you haven't sat on the school-bench in vain. You're a talented fellow; it's a pity!"—"Why a pity?" replied Etzel. "Talents can't do anyone any harm, if one happens to have them. I know more than that," he added, with a tolerable affectation of conceit; "I know whole poems of Catullus by heart, for example. Would you like to hear them?"—"Attention, gentlemen!" exclaimed Schirmer, wiping his mouth with a paper napkin, for they had already reached the last course. "Attention! Little Mohl is going to recite a Latin poem! Go ahead!"—Etzel, with a curious smile, began:

*Quid est Catulle? quid moraris emori?
sella in curuli struma Nonius sedet,
per consulatum perierat Vatinius,
quid est Catulle? quid moraris emori?*

The listeners looked puzzled; it sounded to them like Hindustani, and even if they had understood that in these words Catullus was calling upon himself to die, because Vatinius could perjure himself and go unpunished, what could they have made of it? But the boy continued, and his cheeks flushed with the significance of the poem, as though he, like the poet himself, were overcome with amazement:

*Risi nescio quem modo e corona
qui, cum mirifice Vatiniana
meus crimina Calvus explicasset
admirans ait haec manusque tollens:
di magni, salaputium desertum. . . .*

"Ye gods, but that fellow has the gift of the gab!" Etzel threw in a translation of the last line, and they all grinned appreciation, while the simple-minded Schirmer shouted "bravo" and loudly clapped his hands. Oh God, thought Etzel, if I only had glasses now! and with good reason, for "the Professor" had turned his head, as he had done once before, but now a little farther, and as before he was grinding his terrible lower jaw. However, the fleeting interest which the curious scene had perhaps aroused in him (but one could not be sure of this) was apparently of

brief duration; for a few seconds later he seemed to be again absorbed in his book. And a few minutes later Etzel, who had finished his lunch, got up from his chair and spoke to him. He would like to take lessons in English; the professor had been recommended to him by a number of people; he was going to emigrate next year, and wanted first to learn the language thoroughly; what would the professor charge for lessons?

Waremmé-Warschauer directed his black spectacles upon Etzel's face as deliberately as though he had been trying to bring an object into the field of his opera-glasses. "One mark an hour," he replied, with a rather hoarse but incisive voice. How many hours did Etzel want? Three? Four? Monday and Wednesday from four to five, Saturday from four to six. What was the name? Mohl? M-O-H-L? Very well. Good-bye!

"It looks," thought Etzel, disconsolately, "as though he had not so far paid the least attention to me."

6

Warschauer lived on the third floor of the same house; he had a single room, but it was so large that it was divided in two by a sliding door. The bed stood in a windowless alcove behind the door. Two or three hundred books were stacked in piles like pilasters along the walls; they were mostly paper-bound, and it might have been noted that there were a great many books of a technical nature; works on Jewish antiquities and Semitic philology, Hebrew lexicons, editions of the Talmud, commentaries on the Bible, yearly reports of Orientalist societies, and Kabbalistic literature. There were no shelves in the room. Its atmosphere did not suggest a "home"; it was a storehouse of objects which seemed to have no relation to one another, but rather to have come together by chance. There were cobwebs on the ceiling and in the corners. The windows had not been washed for so long that one could hardly see through them. Ornaments, pictures, and anything that made for comfort, with the exception of an old carved sofa, seemed unknown to the occupant of this room. It was the most melancholy, neglected and barn-like

lodging that Etzel had ever seen. After feeling his way along a pitch-dark corridor, on which some five or six other persons had their rooms—a pedlar, a washerwoman, a male nurse, and a photographer with a number of children—he had knocked, but had heard no one moving; and he then found himself in the middle of the desolate room, as lost as a needle in a haystack. After a while Warschauer came from behind the sliding door, and nodded to his new pupil, with an amiability that made his pale, earthy face look for a few moments like that of a grinning old woman.

His person was as clean and neat as his surroundings were dirty and disorderly. From time to time he would stand up, seize a clothes-brush that was hanging on the wall, and brush his coat and waistcoat. Every quarter of an hour or so he would disappear behind the sliding door, and carefully wash his hands; then he would return to his chair, grinning like an old woman, and lay his fat white hands, the nails of which were so closely cut that the ends of his fingers protruded over them like little hats, with the deliberate gesture of a prelate, on his knees, and resume his teaching.

His method was simple and practical. He laid the greatest emphasis on phonetics and verbal instruction, incidentally explaining the grammar. He appealed to the eye and the ear, writing single syllables with chalk on a blackboard which stood beside the table. He very soon realized that his pupil was grounded in the humanities, whereupon he redoubled his grimacing affability, which was obviously only skin-deep; and since he had a foundation to work on he was able to abridge his method. He dealt with the etymological roots of the language, and spoke of the qualities of the English race, the results of which appear in the conciseness of their speech. His remarks fell from his lips as carelessly as pennies from the hands of a millionaire. But what he said he said without moving his eyes, without a glance at his pupil, and his black glasses were like the external confirmation of the fact. I should like to tear off his glasses, thought Etzel; it is as though he wore them to annoy me. His eagerness

to learn and his mental agility filled Warschauer with an astonishment which was obviously affected; and it often seemed as though he were even attempting an absurd parody of the gushing outbursts of the preposterous Schirmer. Etzel was disconcerted; the man's Jesuitical behaviour angered him; during the second lesson he asked why the professor was making fun of him, as he was not at all conceited in respect of his own meagre knowledge. Warschauer replied with a startled and beseeching gesture, which meant: For heaven's sake, young man, what do you think of me? how could I dream of such a thing? after all, who am I? But this was acting. It was sheer comedy, like all the rest. The more Etzel persevered, the more Warschauer's unctuous joviality increased. He realized, of course, that Etzel was no ordinary pupil; his good breeding was unmistakable; his courtesy and his desire to please betrayed some secret purpose; where did he come from, and what was his game? But there was no need to be uneasy because a little dog was sniffing at his heels; let him sniff; there was always time enough to give him a kick; meanwhile one might give him a little bit of sugar, or now and again a bone; let him sniff, and let him gnaw.—This roughly expressed Waremmé-Warschauer's attitude, and Etzel understood it well enough. Nevertheless, he knew how to coax his way into the man's daily life; and he did it like a parasite fastening upon its host. His toadying manœuvres began by his arriving ten or twenty minutes before the appointed time, even if another pupil was already having a lesson (the professor had not any too many pupils), and he would linger after the appointed hour, even if Warschauer was beginning to work. As far as Etzel could make out, he was busy compiling a bibliography of books on Arabic decoration for the director of a museum, under whose name the work was to appear, in return for a pitifully small payment; for the director was an eminent expert on the subject, and could have done the thing himself if he had had a little more leisure.

Etzel busied himself with the books, which were covered with inches of dust; he dusted them and classified them, and decided to make a catalogue, without asking Warschauer too

particularly whether he wanted one. He noticed that Warschauer, who neither drank nor smoked, was very fond of strong black coffee, which he made for himself over a small spirit-lamp. He took to making it for him. Chance, which he believed was favouring him, gave him a helping hand. Warschauer ran a nail into his foot, and was unable to leave his room for several days. He had no one to wait on him (and the curious thing was, that in spite of his miserable circumstances he did not seem to be poor, or to have anything of the beggar about him; on the contrary, his mode of living often gave the impression of a disguise adopted for some secret purpose: which, of course, was purely an illusion); he made his own bed, and cleaned his own shoes. Etzel fetched his lunch from Frau Bobike's kitchen, and his frugal supper from a shop in the Demminerstrasse. Of course, he had to modify the arrangement of his days to fit in with these altered circumstances; but his days had been waiting to be so governed. He obtained some lysol and bandages from the chemist's; he washed the wound and bandaged it, as competently as though he had just taken a first-aid course. Such conversation as they had (for, naturally, they could not, now that they were living in such close proximity, behave like a couple of lay figures) became more and more animated on Etzel's part; he was, in fact, becoming a tireless chatterbox, whereas Warschauer seemed to grow more inaccessible than ever, and to withdraw himself into the background as though embarrassed. He was lavish of insincere expressions of gratitude, of dismayed protests, as though a person such as himself was quite unworthy of such kindness or such self-sacrifice. There were even moments when Warschauer manifested something like affection. (Etzel could not help being terrified at these moments; he shuddered inwardly when they occurred, though at the same time he told himself, like one who sets his teeth and thrusts his hand into a burning stove in order to rescue some valued possession, that nothing could be more favourable to his purpose.) This affection, however, manifested itself in nothing more alarming than attempts to touch him, a glittering of the eyes behind the black glasses, and the queer,

empty grinding of the hypertrophied lower jaw. To Etzel, it was as though an idol had suddenly come to life, reaching out with a snort because it had conceived an appetite for human flesh. One day he was chatting to Warschauer, in a manner which was half assumed and half his own innocent and boyish manner, about what he was going to do when he went to America; for his desire to emigrate was his fictitious pretext for taking lessons. He wanted first of all to become a cowboy, and then to earn enough to buy a big estate, with lakes and woods, cattle and game, and to live there in freedom. "To live in freedom" had in his mouth a note of resolute enthusiasm. Warschauer raised his head and emitted a hoarse chuckle. He stretched out his arm and pulled the boy so close to him that Etzel, with a mingling of revulsion and instinctive self-defence, which he was able to overcome only because of the purpose which possessed him, felt the man's breath on his forehead as he spoke, nodding his head didactically: "To live in freedom? There? There? To live in freedom! Boy, boy, boy!" And he laughed a laugh of bitter amusement that seemed to come from his very bowels. Etzel broke away and shrugged his shoulders with displeasure. "Of course I know . . ." he growled, "of course I know . . . you . . ." and he stopped, and stood there defiantly, shaking his hair back from his forehead. The eyes behind the black glasses were fixed upon him with an expression which Etzel described to himself as that of a cannibal, although they were neither cruel nor evil; but they harboured the strange somnolent concupiscence of an idol coming to life. It may be that memories of old fairy-tales were stirring in Etzel's mind; after all, the day before yesterday he was still a child. . . .

Warschauer wanted for the first time to go out that night to a beer-hall near the Stettin railway-station, where there was to be a mass meeting; Etzel offered to accompany him, since he was not yet quite steady on his legs. Warschauer had a passion for all sorts of human assemblies, whether processions, public exhibitions, demonstrations of strikers, or mere street gatherings; the crowd had for him an irresistible attraction. He was happiest

in confined spaces, when he was wedged in amongst thousands of his fellows, and skilful speakers were exciting the mob to fanatical demonstrations; and he explained to Etzel that what he enjoyed was the intoxication of the bliss of depersonalization and anonymity. Etzel did not quite understand him, but he consoled himself with the thought that Warschauer would probably often speak of this again. They were to start at half-past eight; but first Etzel was to fetch a cold supper from the Demminerstrasse. He set out whistling, with his hands in his pockets, but on the way back he had to take one of them out in order to carry the parcel of food, which was fairly bulky, as he had bought a pound of cherries; but he was still able to whistle.

As he was going upstairs he heard Warschauer's deep, heavy, sonorous voice. Oho, he thought, the professor has company! But it was only the Paalzow boy (Paalzow was the photographer next door). The Paalzow boy was just Etzel's age, but he was a degenerate youth, who had already made several appearances in the juvenile court. This was not his first call that day—as Warschauer angrily remarked. He was demanding money, and his pretext was simply a piece of cynical audacity; Warschauer indignantly described it as an attempt at blackmail. A few days earlier Warschauer had been expecting some books from the director of the museum; he was obliged to go out, and wanted, before going, to ask Mother Paalzow to take in the books for him, if the messenger should come while he was out. But there was no one at home at the Paalzows'; their room was empty. So much of the story was true; the Paalzow boy, however, maintained that the professor had left the door of the Paalzows' room open, and, as a result, someone had stolen a pair of shoes, which the professor must now replace; he did not demand the full value of the shoes, but, modestly enough, would be content with three marks. But three marks he must have, or he would make a row about the matter, and the professor would have reason to regret it. When Etzel entered, he was standing in the room with arms akimbo, his hat on one side, impudently demanding "his money". Warschauer was sitting at the table, pen

in hand, only glancing sidelong in the boy's direction. He was absurdly intimidated by such attacks. Etzel went to the open window, passing behind the Paalzow boy, and laid the parcel of food on the window-sill, first taking out a handful of cherries. It was a warm May evening, and he hung out of the window, as though he wanted to have it understood that the matter did not concern him, and that he did not intend to side with either party. Far below in the courtyard an empty wooden crate was standing beneath the window, and he busied himself for a time in trying to spit the cherry-stones into the crate; without any great success. Meanwhile the Paalzow boy was becoming more and more impertinent; Warschauer's silence gave him courage, and in the raciest Berlin dialect he shouted that he would find a way to get his money, even if he had to set fire to the stinking study. Hereupon Etzel turned round, walked over to him, and nudging him with his elbow, said: "Now then, out you go!" The Paalzow boy spun round as though he had been bitten and stared at Etzel venomously. "We'll talk it over reasonably, outside," continued Etzel, winking, as though he regarded the professor as an idiot, but wished to conceal the fact, and as though he were authorized to settle his affairs—and in particular such difficulties as this with the Paalzow boy—in a gentlemanly fashion. When he had got the young hooligan out of the room he said: "Now, listen, Paalzow; that story is a stinking lie. You needn't pretend to me! I understand; you think you've hit on a clever trick; but the thing isn't worth a whole thaler; you'd better be satisfied with a half. Here's one mark fifty; I'll settle with the professor; and now clear out." Hesitating, distrustful, not quite knowing what to make of Etzel, but feeling altogether uncomfortable, the Paalzow boy took the money, and shuffled away down the corridor with a sullen and rebellious expression.

When Etzel re-entered the room Warschauer had lit the gas above his work-table, and the scratching of his pen was audible. Through the open window the tooting of motor-horns and the gongs of the electric trams could be heard faintly over the roofs of the houses. Etzel sat down on a pile of books and, swinging

one leg, began once more to eat his cherries. Suddenly Warschauer turned in his chair and asked: "You gave that black-guard money?"

Etzel nodded vivaciously.—"Why? It is stupid and wrong to give such a blackmailing rascal money. Why did you do it? Have you such an awful lot of it?" Etzel spat a few cherry-stones in a long trajectory through the window. "I haven't by any means a lot. But in the first place, you don't want a row here. In the second place, what's a rascal, what's a blackguard? He's a pitiful fellow. One can twist him round one's finger for one mark fifty. I wanted to see whether he was really such a pitiful fellow. That's the only positive thing about him; three marks with a discount of fifty per cent. Have I done wrong?"

Warschauer turned round a little farther in his chair. "The positive thing: what do you mean by that?" he asked.

Etzel was busy spitting out his cherry-stones. "Well, the positive is just what one must have if one doesn't want to go under," he replied indifferently; "some little ideal, for example; a belief, a person, a cause. They none of them have that." He made a vague gesture with his hand towards the door, as though to designate all the Paalzow boys outside who were yearning for "the positive".

Warschauer was silent and returned to his work. But after a few minutes had elapsed he laid down his pen; turning round again, he rested his right elbow in his left hand, and covering his chin and mouth with his right hand, looked thus for a while at Etzel, who did not appear to be in any way discomfited. "The devil take me if I understand you, Mohl," he said at last, softly. "After all, your name may be something quite different, eh? Now, come, out with your true colours!" This did not sound either distrustful or threatening, but rather benevolent and insincerely amiable, and there was once more the "cannibalistic" undertone.

Etzel suddenly jumped off the pile of books. "Perhaps my name is no more Mohl than yours is Warschauer," he replied, audaciously. "Perhaps; who knows?"

Warschauer, very slowly, rose to his feet, and very slowly went over to the boy. "Hullo, youngster?" The words came from his chest in a new voice, which seemed in some way to have become demoralized. "Hullo, youngster?"

"I only said, perhaps," insisted Etzel, growing a shade paler, and meeting the black glitter of the horn-rimmed spectacles with the piercing glance of his short-sighted eyes. "Perhaps my name is . . . well, what could it be? Perhaps my name is Maurizius. There are still some people of that name. Why shouldn't my name be Maurizius?"

Warschauer-Waremme looked as though someone had called to him from the street, over the roofs of the houses. His features contracted in an expression of gloomy, listening reminiscence. "Maurizius . . .?" he repeated broodingly. He drew his fat white hand slowly across his forehead. Suddenly he moved a step nearer to Etzel, took off his glasses, and looked him straight in the face, with amazed curiosity. For the first time Etzel saw his eyes; they were dull, pale, and watery; almost the eyes of a corpse.

CHAPTER IX

I

THE *Generalin* had received a letter from Sophia von Andergast which had caused her promptly to send the following reply:

“DEAR SOPHIA:

“It seems to me best that you should come here. However, you need not ask me anything, and I have no advice to give you. But I think your decision is so proper that I ask you to stay here with me, and if you accept I shall be glad. I hope you are not already on the way, and that this letter will reach you. Who should understand your despair better than I? I myself have been in a frightful condition ever since the boy left. We will talk over what you ought to do. From me, of course, you cannot expect much help; I am a useless old woman, and it is not only this regrettable fact that restricts my freedom of movement. Your son is the son of my son: *voilà tout*. But this time, Sophia, I am on your side, and as long as my courage and strength hold out I shall stand by you. Of course, I tremble at the idea of a meeting between you and Wolf. But it will have to be; you are right. He must give an accounting to you; before God and man he is bound to do so. You must ask him for your child. Even though he cannot, unhappily, tell you where he is, he will have to tell you how it could have come about that he does not know. Your friends have not informed you falsely; no one knows where our boy is. Oh, heavens! I no longer sleep at night. I am constantly racking my brain with whys and where. Your letter shattered a last foolish hope of mine that he had fled to you. Recently he spoke of you often, but I was not permitted to listen, and what was the result? He stopped talking about you. Then I felt that I was really a useless old creature, no good to anyone in the world. Oh, not to grow old! or if one does grow old, not to feel old! After all this, you will be all the more surprised at this letter. But the fact that you, his mother, had to hear first from strangers—even if you call them friends in such a case, they are strangers—

that your child had left him, and could not be found: that was the last straw. He ignored the three letters which you wrote him during the last few months; well, I can just understand that; but not to inform you, not at least to have his lawyer write to tell you what has occurred—which concerns you as much as him, and perhaps a thousand times more—that is too . . . consistent for my understanding. You young people are so amazingly logical anyway; yes, even you; there are some things about you which I can't understand; but I don't want to become garrulous, at least not on paper; perhaps you will explain things to me. I have not seen you for nine years, dear Sophia; or is it, God forbid, ten? And I don't know what has become of you as a human being; as a woman you are closer to me than formerly; I believe that we shall understand one another without much talk. I don't take much stock in words, but for that very reason I care all the more for people, provided they are human.—Believe me, yours affectionately,

“CILLY VON ANDERGAST.”

In order that she might not be accused of conspiring with the enemy behind his back, the old lady considered it necessary to inform her son of the correspondence. She did so in a letter which was considerably shorter than the one addressed to her former daughter-in-law, and she added that Sophia would arrive on the morrow, or the next day, and would stay at her flat. This was an unexpected blow for Herr von Andergast, which abruptly convinced him of the uselessness of his constant precautions. He found his mother's letter lying on his desk in the afternoon. He read it, folded it, and put it aside. He took it up again, re-read it, tore it into four pieces, and threw it in the waste-paper basket. Ten minutes later he picked the pieces out of the basket, threw them into the stove, and watched them burn. He strode up and down; finally he lifted the receiver of the telephone, rang up the Palace of Justice, asked for Director Günzburg, and told him to inform the superintendent of the penitentiary at Kressa that the attorney-general would call there

the following morning. Whether there was a causal connection between the letter which had been so incomprehensibly destroyed and this professional resolve can only be conjectured. Certainly Herr von Andergast had not previously fixed any date for an interview with the prisoner Maurizius. If this was not precisely fleeing from Sophia, it was none the less something very like a flight; an internal defence, which found expression in a change of place. At least he would not be there when she arrived. Escape he knew he could not. This time he would have to face her.

2

Kressa towers high between wooded hills, an ancient fortress, the ancestral seat of a royal house. That the nations should keep the dregs of humanity in expiatory confinement where the cradle of its princes formerly stood is a grim commentary on the ephemeral nature of earthly glory. Herr von Andergast's official motor-car, with smoking exhaust, dashed up the steep incline to the recently added wing, where Superintendent Pauli was waiting at the gate. He was a pale, slender man of thirty, with a pince-nez and a small fair beard; he had formerly been a school-master in the village of Kressa. He received the attorney-general and led him to an office on the left of the entrance; a painfully clean room, something half-way between a middle-class sitting-room, with antimacassars on the chairs and sofa and photographs on the walls, and an office with a filing cabinet, a desk, a telephone, and a signalling device. At the desk a man was writing, a favoured convict, who was apparently breathless with excitement on beholding the distinguished visitor, for his eyes were glassy, and his hands made unmeaning attempts to put his papers in order. Herr von Andergast sat down and invited Pauli, with a gesture, to make his report. He addressed him as Herr Superintendent, and was drily polite. Pauli explained that since the last attempt at escape, which had occurred ten days ago, all had been quiet in the institution; at all events, there was no particular ground for complaint. Herr von Andergast wished to hear the

details of the unsuccessful attempt, which had been frustrated by the watchfulness of the night guard in the upper courtyard. The superintendent's bloodless face coloured slightly at the recollection of the regrettable incident, and the disgrace which it had brought upon him, for what would the authorities think of him?—and the thought that he could never be certain that the attempt would not be repeated. There was only one thing worse, and which had even more disastrous consequences, and that was an open revolt. They had had that, too. It seemed inevitable. One did for these people all that was possible; they had their regular meals, their prescribed hours of sleep, their religious services, their periods of recreation; one treated them decently, and made things easier for them where one could; but they had no judgment; they never ceased conspiring. All this was reflected in the features of the young superintendent as he told the story of the last attempt at escape; it was a dull and depressing narrative; the only noteworthy detail was that the men had contrived—they were the occupants of dormitory twelve—in the space of two hours to break through a wall sixty inches thick, making a hole through which they could easily slip. They had then let themselves down by ropes of bast, which they had gradually removed from the work-rooms, and had hidden, it was impossible to guess where and how, in the dormitory. Five men! A distance of twenty-five yards! “It was senseless and it was useless,” continued the superintendent, in his quiet, melancholy voice, with downcast eyes, “for there again they had thirty feet of wall in front of them, and the ropes were not long enough; they would have had to jump the last fifteen feet. Simply madness!”

And apart from this? inquired Herr von Andergast, discreetly, as though to spare the man's feelings; so far as he remembered there were some difficult people here?—Yes, to be sure, admitted Pauli, with resignation; above all there was Hiss, the murderer of the police-sergeant Jänisch; the Baron would remember, the man had attacked him at night in the street. He was a difficult customer; there was no way of taming him and breaking him

in to the regulations; they had had him now six weeks, and every day he made some groundless complaint. He had been at Dietz three months, and there he had written petition after petition; he wanted to get away; he could not stand it; finally they had moved him to Kressa, and now he wanted to go back at Dietz at any price. He was lazy to a degree that was pathological; his only desire was to write; he wanted to write the story of his life, and thereby, at the same time, to give proof of his innocence. He had not committed a murder; he had been plunged into the greatest poverty by the brutality of his father, an incurable drunkard who had begotten him in a fit of intoxication. On the occasion of the alleged murder, one winter night, he had begged the gendarme for a cigarette, whereupon the man had made a movement towards a revolver in his hip-pocket, so that he, Hiss, in his fear of being shot, had himself pulled the trigger. That could not be called murder; one could not shut up a man for life for such a thing; it was self-defence, nothing more. Unfortunately, continued Pauli, shaking his head, a lawyer from Aschaffenburg had turned up, who had assumed that the cause of this liar and hypocrite was a just one; he was constantly asking for consultations with his client, and was flooding the courts with applications for revision. "You will see the man, Baron," continued the superintendent. "Three days ago we gave him the solitary cell for which he had asked, with paper, pen, and ink, so that he could write, but so far he has not written a single word. That's the sort he is." Pauli cast a glance at the clerk, who understood him immediately; he took a blue exercise-book from a drawer, and handed it to Pauli. On an oval label was written: "Recollections of My Youth." "Hiss wrote that," said the superintendent, handing the book to Herr von Andergast, who opened it and glanced through the pages for a while. The quick, flowing handwriting suggested a commercial clerk; the style varied between an insufferable maudlin flatulence and boastful self-admiration; at the same time the narrative displayed an astonishing exactness, and a wealth of not uninteresting details. "Yes, they take themselves very seriously, and are very casual

towards the rest of us," said Herr von Andergast, putting the book aside and rising. "I should like, Herr Superintendent, to go over the institution, and at three o'clock this afternoon I should like a private interview with the prisoner Maurizius." Pauli bowed and rang for the inspector. "How does the man behave?" asked Herr von Andergast in a casual tone, with his hand already on the door-knob. Pauli smiled with lifted eyebrows. "Oh," he replied, "if they were all like him, Baron! Then life here would be easy." And then the inspector entered the room: a well-preserved, elderly man, with a friendly, intelligent face.

3

An iron grating was unlocked, and they entered a dark courtyard surrounded by towering walls. The inspector went ahead, followed by Herr von Andergast and the superintendent, two warders in uniform bringing up the rear. The courtyard had been swept clean; everywhere one noticed a degree of order which perhaps was not entirely usual. Herr von Andergast knew what happened before such a prearranged visit; how everyone who had arms and legs was set to work beforehand, so that there should be no cause for complaint; and if anything was wrong they would try to excuse themselves by alluding to established custom or to lack of funds. But the Baron knew that these people were conscientious, and practised their harsh vocation with understanding and patience. Things were not now as they were in former times—and not so long ago, either—when the penitentiaries were notorious infernos, to whose horrors people dared to allude only in frightened whispers; when the directors were irresponsible tyrants and the warders were veritable torturers. One was living in a civilized State, and punishment was inflicted in accordance with humane principles—too humane, one sometimes feared. Kressa, moreover, had in this respect a particularly good reputation.

However, he had not come to make one of the customary inspections. He had made use of this official pretext in order to

draw as little attention as possible to his real purpose. He did not want to have people saying that the attorney-general had been to see Leonhart Maurizius; that he was evidently interested in the case, and that something was afoot. He did not want any talk. No, nothing was afoot; there was no need for excitement. So the inspection, which was only a pretext, must be conscientiously carried out.

The five men silently mounted a steep winding staircase; the inspector opened an iron door; they went through a long, almost circular corridor; above their heads were small barred windows, narrowing externally; then the inspector's keys grated again, a second iron door was opened, and they entered one of the work-rooms. Herr von Andergast involuntarily pulled out his handkerchief and pressed it to his nostrils. A smell came to meet him like that from a cage of animals. He knew that smell. As a young man he had suffered from attacks of depression before such visits, because this smell made him almost faint every time. It was a smell of musty clothes, of warm, mildewed glue, of rancid fat, of mouldy walls, of human perspiration and unwholesome breath. The weather was inclement, and the windows of all three rooms were closed. Perhaps a hundred and fifty men of all ages were working there; some were moving about freely, while others were confined in pens like sheepfolds, shut in by ropes of bast. They were weaving straw mats, or twisting ropes; some were cobbling; a few were working at carpenters' benches. From one of these a man approached, with stealthy steps, so that one was hardly aware of his presence, and with a secretive expression plucked at the superintendent's sleeve, and whispered in his ear that the trouble with the teredo in his brain was not getting any better; the pain was growing worse every day. The superintendent, listening as though he took the complaint seriously, exchanged a glance of understanding with the inspector, who shrugged his shoulders. There was no doubt that the man was malingering; but if one refused to believe him, and reprimanded him, he always became dangerously excited. It might be that he had conceived the fixed idea of the

teredo in his brain in order to compel attention, and to feel that he was a person of some importance.

The inspector sent for a certain Buschfeld, who had been guilty of insubordination that morning, and quietly and pleasantly took him to task, as though appealing to his common sense. Buschfeld, during the revolution of 1918, had shot General Winkler in Darmstadt, after previously boxing his ears, for no other reason than that he was a general; in other respects he was a quite inoffensive person, and not at all unpopular. Buschfeld smiled in a peculiar manner as he justified himself, almost like a boy who is reproached for being obstreperous; his smile, half embarrassed, half sarcastic, revealed his magnificent teeth, gleaming in a well-cut face, with the strongly-developed chin disfigured by a stubble of beard. Herr von Andergast approached and listened. Like everyone else in the place, as soon as he was given permission to speak, Buschfeld, after three sentences, began to talk of his crime and his sentence, proving, with a wealth of apparently carefully considered arguments, that he was innocent. Seeing an audience around him, he held forth with a will, describing the situation and explaining the misunderstanding of which he was the victim. He smiled continually with his large magnificent teeth. Herr von Andergast looked into his great foolish hazel-brown eyes. In those eyes there was an uncontrollable and devouring desire, which became a madness at the very hint of the thought: "outside". When he said "outside" he meant the world, life, freedom, trees, grass, women, skies, taverns: a glowing conglomeration of lovely things. The strange gentleman before him came from "outside", and so he had a halo about him, an intoxicating odour, an aura of unspeakable possibilities. He stared at him and seemed to ask, in amazement: What, you come from "outside", and are going "out" again, and you are not beside yourself with happiness? They all had this devouring, maddening conception of the "outside" in their eyes; it was something other than desire; it was much more; it was beyond it and more exalted, more tragic, more divine than any earthly longing. There were eyes in which it was almost

dead; too much time had gone by; the soul had lost its pictures of the outer world; they rustled about like dead and withered leaves, for the man himself was withered. There was one, a man of fifty, with a grey, soap-coloured, shiny face framed by a black beard; he looked like a charcoal-burner. He had been there for nine years. He had killed his employer, because the man had withheld from him the two thousand marks which he had saved during many years of labour and had confidently entrusted to him. When questioned, he told the story in his Rhenish dialect; he breathed more deeply and stood more erect; the bowed and powerful body relived once more the intolerable injustice whose distant echo shook him to the very soul; he related how he had needed the money, and had asked for it, once, twice, five times in all; how the farmer tried to make excuses, beating about the bush and putting him off, and how at last he was forced to realize that the money was no longer there. What could he do then? Neither God nor judge could help him; one just had to do the man in, or one would have eaten one's heart out. A troubled spirit. A broken and distracted soul. Beside him worked Schergentz, a boy of twenty-five, an incendiary; no one had ever discovered why he had set the place on fire; he had been a good son and an industrious workman; one night he had set fire to his neighbour's barn, and three people had been burned to death. Why? No one knew. Since the hour of his arrest he had not spoken a word; his father, his mother, the witnesses, the examining magistrate, the police, the judge, the counsel for the defence and the jury had all done their best; but not a syllable; he was dumb. He did not even talk in his sleep, nor to himself; he never forgot himself. Now, to-day, the superintendent spoke to him persuasively, but from the expressions on the faces of the inspector and the warders one could see how useless was the attempt. Herr von Andergast laid his hand heavily on the man's shoulder, and with a piercing glance of his violet-blue eyes into the dumbly smouldering eyes of the prisoner he said: "Come, man, what is the meaning of this? Who's going to gain by it? Certainly not you! Well, then!" But the man's

lips remained sealed. Months earlier a fellow-prisoner, one of the "intellectuals", had expressed the opinion that the moment the man was free he would speak, and no sooner. And so his hands performed their accustomed task, while his gloomy half-closed eyes—for they, too, were silent—gazed over the heads of his fellows. There could be no greater contrast than that between him and his nearest neighbour, the young poisoner. He had made away with his fiancée's father because the man had opposed his marriage, and had refused to give his daughter a dowry. His limbs, joints, and muscles, his lips and forehead, all quivered convulsively, and a hectic red flushed his cheeks when he thought of the incomprehensible injustice which had been meted out to him when he was found guilty. Nothing had been proven against him; he had had no thought of evil; the witnesses had been his enemies, and the court was prejudiced. He quoted the testimony of the chemical expert, the evidence of the druggist; it was all false, all perjured; they had suppressed this and invented that merely in order to destroy him. "Why?" asked Herr von Andergast, drily. He shrugged his shoulders, passionately. A conspiracy on the part of everybody. His words tumbled over one another as he hastily went on weaving, pounding the mat with a flat mallet, and wetting his lips with the tip of a tongue that darted out like an adder's. His eyes were constantly lowered; the whole man was a lie incarnate. But what a pitiful lie, what a timid skulking thing, how transparent, and how feeble! The body seemed only to obey the will; it was a derelict mechanism, an engine with rusted wheels and broken pipes; that it still breathed, swallowed and digested was surely an illusion.

In the third room there was an old man of sixty or sixty-five; he himself was not certain of his age; he had spent thirty years in prison, with only brief intervals; a typical recidivist. His last sentence was passed eleven years ago. He looked like a jolly vagabond, with his pepper-and-salt chin-beard, his thickset body, short neck, small round head, small turned-up nose, small mouth and small bulging forehead. Herr von Andergast inquired as to his offence. He smiled complacently, looking on the ground.

"Oh, just a leetle bit o' thieving," he replied, testing the edge of his plane with his finger. "Come, Käsbacher," said the inspector, reproachfully; "thieving would not have meant eleven years!"—"No, of course not," the old man admitted; "a leetle morality was mixed up with it, too."—"Well, and are you satisfied with the treatment you are getting?" asked Herr von Andergast. "Oh, yes, there's nothing to complain of, now the humane treatment is in force; no, it's fine now in these here institutions. Humanity is a grand thing anyway. Only there might be a little more fat. Fat a fellow does miss." Then, with pathetically downcast eyes: "The twenty-third of May is my birthday."—"Really, and what would you like to have then?" asked the inspector, knowingly. "Liver-sausage, I suppose you'd like that?"—"You've guessed it, Herr Inspector. For the life of me I do love it!" And the thought of liver-sausage beautified the shrivelled old criminal's face as the sunset will beautify the face of a romantic girl. For him the "outside" no longer existed.

4

They climbed one flight higher, to the solitary cells. Herr von Andergast wished to see a few "specimens" only. In the first cell, which had the shape of a tower-chamber, there was a man who had committed murder in a fit of jealousy; a slightly-built man with melancholy features, in an early stage of consumption. They had looked through the Judas and had seen him sitting at the table in a state of complete collapse; when the door was opened he sprang up and stood at attention. They called this good behaviour, and he was much liked for it. He was a marionette, who knew how to conceal his inner despair to the point of self-effacement. The inspector, closing the iron door, remarked in a professional tone: "One often hears him sighing all night for hours at a time." The next "specimen", a gigantic fellow, had been guilty of rape and murder; he was one of the men involved in the attempted evasion of October. He had succeeded in getting hold of an iron bar with which he meant to strike down the warder on his way to the bath; this was to be the signal for his fellow-

conspirators. It happened, however, that the warder on duty that day was one who had secretly given him a stick of chewing-tobacco a few weeks earlier, so that he could not strike him; the bar simply fell from his hand. He stood against the wall, blinking. From the window of his cell, far off in the landscape, he could see an apple-tree in blossom at a bend in the river, delicately outlined against the gable of a distant house. Sometimes he would stand from morning till evening, leaning motionless against the wall and staring at the distant tree, and if the warder opened the door he merely turned his head as though drunken with sleep, and continued to blink and to gaze. . . . When he was "outside", he had never had such impulses; what did he care about an apple-tree in blossom?—he had never even looked at one; but now it was something tremendous; the symbol of all that he had missed and neglected, as the siskin which he was permitted to keep was for his neighbour in the adjoining cell. This man was there for life; he had strangled an eight-year-old girl, and had then literally torn her to pieces; but he loved his bird so dearly that his eyes filled with tears whenever he looked at it. The walls of his cell were covered with all sorts of photographs and newspaper illustrations, and there was too a small colour-print of the Madonna; and each of these things was dear to his heart, and he would gaze at it for hours. He greeted the visitors with a childlike smile; there was something profoundly equivocal about this smile; though it seemed so winning and natural, it reminded one of the raving of a man delirious with fever. He had tied a cloth round his head; the superintendent asked him why he had done so; what was the matter? and he replied, humorously, that the night before he had been to Kressa to attend the Kermesse; and he laughed. He pressed his lips against the wires of the bird-cage and wheedled the bird, which had been well trained, to kiss him. The little creature fluttered up and pressed its bill against the man's lips. One was transported into a sentimental scene in a popular novel, in which the human side of a degenerate criminal is supposed to be exhibited, and perhaps the indestructible germ of the divine. But how

frightful it was, how far removed from the illuminating Word; could God know anything of it?

They came to the dormitories. The superintendent showed Herr von Andergast the window which two convicts had broken through eight and a half years previously; the third had remained stuck between the bars; he had pushed his head, chest and arms through, but his hips were caught fast, and his comrades could not free him; so there he hung, from midnight until the morning, with his naked greased body projecting like a beam over the depths below, and groaning with pain. The other two had run naked along the highway through the winter night, and had broken into an empty country-house, where they stole some clothes and got away. The superintendent, measuring the narrow space with his hand, said that it still remained a mystery to him how grown-up men could pass through those bars; even a cat could hardly slip through them. "It would seem," said Herr von Andergast, "that the longing for freedom gives these people supernatural powers." The superintendent and the inspector silently agreed. But Herr von Andergast was aware of the banality and ineptness of his remark; since he had entered this building he was conscious of an almost pathological inadequacy; he could not remember that he had ever before felt so irresolute; it was apparent even in his pallor and the uncertainty of his gait; he walked as heavily as though his bones were filled with lead.

There were forty beds in the one room, and sixty in the next; he was aware of them suddenly; beds one over the other and beds next to one another like the twin beds of married couples; this too he noted suddenly, and said, heavily and reluctantly, pointing to the beds, that this arrangement would not do. The two warders grinned to themselves; the expression on the serious, masculine features of the inspector showed that there had been trouble in this connection, and the superintendent murmured: "A regular nest of infection." The superficiality of the remark irritated Herr von Andergast; his forehead flushed angrily, and he continued to gaze at the tiers of empty beds, overcome by a horrible vision, in whose presence his oppressive sense of inade-

quacy became a dawning conviction of guilt. He pressed his hand over his eyes; he wanted to shut out the sight of those beds; they made the very conception of mankind unspeakably disgusting; a mass of slime, inflated with malice and sensuality; the human breast an isolated fragment of darkness, with a twitching muscle in its midst, which it has always been the vain business of the poets and religious enthusiasts to convert into a vessel of all the virtues. *Exemplum docet*, said Herr von Andergast to himself, as he walked into the cell of the dangerous Hiss, which did not need to be unlocked, because the prison chaplain was in the cell, while a warder, a young man with a brutal face disfigured by a red birth-mark, was posted as sentry before the door. The pastor of souls greeted Herr von Andergast. With his tanned features and white mane of hair he looked like a Norwegian fisherman. But the look of priestly power which sets a shining halo round the heads of such men was deceptive in his case, as in that of many others. The power which once gave them wings is for the most part exhausted; they have come to perceive that they can remove only a few grains of sand from the mountain of human misery; that the shaft which they are digging collapses daily over their own heads. They have grown weary; they no longer believe in their calling; they perform their function as officials because they are paid by the State. "A hopeless case," he whispered softly to Herr von Andergast, shrugging a shoulder toward the prisoner; and over his features there spread the shallow irritability of a man who is asked for the hundredth time to pull up a tree by its roots. Hiss stood there with body bowed forward; the mouth in the lemon-yellow face was distorted with rage, and the retreating chin was covered with beads of perspiration; his eyes, yellow like those of a panther, were fastened upon the pastor with a boundless hatred, and when the superintendent spoke to him, asking whether he had begun to write, he looked at him with the same measureless hatred. "Couldn't," he growled bitterly. "How could anyone write here? That fellow over there bellows in his cage all the time enough to drive one crazy. . . ." The look of hatred sneaked round the room, seeking

each face in turn; the body bent a little farther forward; the dangerous panther in this now hardly human being might break loose at any moment. Herr von Andergast involuntarily recoiled a step, and left the cell in silence; the warder had already opened the door of the adjoining cell; its inmate was the man who bellowed in his cage; he was a prisoner condemned to discipline; he had been locked up in an iron cage for three days, and was cowering in the semi-darkness, shaking the bars from time to time like a gorilla, or bellowing plaintively like a cow whose calf has gone to the slaughter. The inspector called to him sternly: "Lorschmann, if you don't keep quiet, nothing to eat to-morrow!" whereupon a rattling sound came from the man's interior, as though his entrails were of rusty iron. Here was a man whose vaunted "humanity" was utterly destroyed; even his outer form was a mere caricature. Herr von Andergast stood at the door of the cell as though he himself were imprisoned; why was all this new to him, why did it all seem so terribly unprecedented? Was there some quality in his eyes which was not in them before, or had the light of the dark-lantern—of Etzel's dark-lantern—fallen on this infernal picture, as it had lately fallen on the brain of the creature in the mirror?

5

Three o'clock. Herr von Andergast had lunched at the Kressa inn; that is, he had paid for a number of dishes, and had consumed only two cups of black coffee. The cell of Convict No. 357 was unlocked, and locked again behind him. A man rose from the table with the drilled promptitude which the institution demanded, and stood there motionless, waiting. He was half a head shorter than Herr von Andergast, and the grey prison suit hung loosely about his lean figure. He stood very erect; even his head was not bowed. The grey of his face hardly differed from the grey of his clothing, and over his high forehead his snow-white hair hung uncut. The cell was a five-cornered room, containing an iron bedstead, a bucket with a lid, a wooden chair, a

wooden table, and a rack with a few books. The window opened into a courtyard; beneath it fifty convicts were moving silently in a circle. This was the prescribed "walking exercise". There was not room for more than fifty men in the courtyard. The walking went on for five hours, until eight parties of men had taken their daily exercise. One could hear the shuffling of their feet on the stone pavement. It sounded like the wind flapping in slackly-set sails.

"You will scarcely remember me," said Herr von Andergast, beginning the conversation in the conventional manner. He did not appear to be eager to get into touch with the man; he did not even give the impression that he was trying to sound the man's frame of mind. Still speaking formally, he mentioned his name. Maurizius, who until that moment had not moved, lifted his chin a little as though he had been struck. Since he was standing with his back to the window one could not see the expression of his eyes, which were like two dark circles in his long narrow face. Herr von Andergast sat down on the chair, indicating by a gesture of his hand that he was waiting for Maurizius to take a seat on the bed opposite. The latter, however, hesitated. He inquired in a husky voice—one could hear how seldom it was used—why he was honoured with this visit? Herr von Andergast sat bending forwards, with his hands folded between his knees. The violet-blue eyes had regained their warm brilliance. He could not answer in a word. He repeated the gesture which invited Maurizius to be seated, and folded his hands again. There was silence in the cell. Then Herr von Andergast, looking down on the floor, remarked that he wished to make it clear that his visit was quite unprofessional in character; it was inspired solely by personal motives.

Maurizius at last sat down on the bed, carefully, as though anxious not to lose a syllable. Now, when the daylight fell full on his face, it had a ghostly look, as though the very blood flowing in his veins was white. His nose was sunken, and his mouth, whose shape was extraordinarily pleasing, and indeed almost fascinating, was closed in a hard line. His eyes were no longer black circles;

they were brown as coffee; they had a mild, steady, joyless expression.

Personal motives: what could they be? Herr von Andergast attentively examined the nail of his right middle finger. Then, raising his eyes, with a look of ingenuous frankness (it was Etzel's very look, even though it was assumed) he replied that he had in mind the possibility of such future measures as might have to be taken.—Measures of what sort?—As to that, there could scarcely be any misunderstanding. Had Maurizius given up all hope?—Maurizius slowly lifted his hand and placed it on his head, and at the gesture Herr von Andergast saw old Maurizius as he had stood before him with his hand pressed to his head. There is something mysterious about inheritance; the external characters which nature transmits from father to son are so often more real and eloquent than the internal. Maurizius replied drily but firmly that he had never at any time, under any circumstances, given up his hope of rehabilitation. Herr von Andergast twirled his forefingers about one another. Rehabilitation? That was scarcely to be thought of. That assuredly was very remote. Such a possibility, even if it existed, would not have impelled him to seek this interview. One had to consider the actual situation. And this pointed to one course only. And one could take this course only if a certain condition was fulfilled, a condition which was attached to it like a line to a fishing-rod. "I understand," said Maurizius. "I believe, myself, that we understand one another," said Herr von Andergast. There was a pause.

"This is yet another attempt on an unsuitable subject," began Maurizius, in his unaccustomed voice, gazing at his knees with knitted brows. "Since I have been living in this place many people have tried. . . . They were quite crazy with eagerness to attain their object; directors (for it is only recently that we have had a superintendent), four directors, among them a retired colonel, then the various legal officials, a gentleman from the Ministry of Justice, and above all, of course, the clerical gentlemen. The pastor Porschitzky, whom we have here now, is the seventh who

has come to me. (He counted them over in his mind.) Yes, he is the seventh. One—I don't remember whether it was the third or the fourth—his name was Meinertshagen—never left my cell for two days and two nights. In the same time, and with less exertion, he might have converted a whole village of negroes. In the end I felt as though my head had been cracked open. In my despair I said to him—at that time I could still feel despairing about such matters: 'Herr Meinertshagen, when Moses struck the water from the rock he performed a miracle. You want to perform a miracle on me; but you will first have to conjure into me what you want to conjure out of me. How shall a man confess to a deed which he did not commit?' He gave it up then; but from that day onwards he ignored my existence. He did not believe me. No one believes me."

Herr von Andergast's features expressed a certain formal regret. He did not want to appear as though he too did not believe the convict; but Maurizius probably knew that he did not. For the time being he agreed with the man, in so far as he listened politely. Much is often achieved by allowing a man to approach a subject himself, and he would not for the world interrupt the prisoner's outpourings. Herr von Andergast knew that such men, condemned as they were to decades of solitary confinement, would at the slightest provocation, if merely encouraged by a glance, fall into an automatism of communicativeness. They felt it as a redeeming kindness if one merely listened to them; they hardly expected a reply.

But Maurizius seemed to sense his visitor's thoughts. You may know this and that (a passing quiver of his mouth seemed to say), but what do you know of "decades"—what do you know of "time"? That time is you none of you know; only that it *was*. The present is for you a magnificent lightning-flash between two periods of darkness; for me it is an unceasing darkness between a fire which has sunk beneath the horizon and another for whose rising I am waiting. Perpetual, perpetual waiting is my present; and so long as I have to wait, that vague and immeasurable period is the present. He alone knows hell who has experienced what

the present really is. . . . Maurizius raised his eyes; his eyelids lifted like the wax lids over a doll's eyes. It was as though he only now realized that the man sitting before him was the same man who once upon a time, long, long ago, had thrust him, with superhuman inexorability, into this abyss. How is it possible that you are still alive? his searching, penetrating glance seemed to say, while the curiously small white teeth of his lower jaw gnawed his upper lip; how is it possible that you are here in my present, you who have no present? It is almost as though Attila, or Ivan the Terrible, were sitting before one; as though those "outside" were as immortal as oneself.

Since Herr von Andergast maintained his challenging silence, counting on a magic whose power he had learned from analogous cases (as though his self-assurance was as yet wholly unshaken, as though he was not aware how irrevocably it had been undermined), Maurizius reverted to his last words. "No, no one believed me," he said, as though to himself; "the accusation had merely to be made, and I was already guilty. I had many friends; at that time I could call them friends; as I saw life then they were friends; but from the day of the indictment they were all swept away. I kept on looking round for them; I could not understand it; such a withdrawal. . . . I had not injured any of them, I had not betrayed anyone; I thought they must surely know me; every man has his moral standard, so to speak; we had confided so much in one another; not a crevice had remained unknown, or so one thought . . . and not one of them . . . no one . . . it was as if one had suddenly appeared under a different name . . . in a new world."

"You forget one," Herr von Andergast reminded him. "I think your father never lost his faith in you." It was not easy for him to bring himself to make this reference; it was too intimate; but in the first place, he told himself, he was here with a purpose of dissimulation; and in the second place his opponent was beginning to fascinate him; here was a mingling of exactitude and breadth, of coldness and, presumably, a resolutely suppressed passion, which compelled

his attention, dissipating the distrustful indifference which he had brought with him.

Maurizius nodded, almost imperceptibly. "Yes, that's true," he replied. "Father, yes, he . . . but father does not count. There is a difference between the tie of blood and other ties. If one belongs to a man it proves nothing to the world if one stands by him. Possession effaces guilt. Elli too would have. . . ." He stopped, shaking his head. This was certainly a remarkable "too"; it was a remarkable comparison which he had suppressed. Herr von Andergast drew his cigarette-case from his waistcoat pocket and offered it to Maurizius, who, surprised by the offer, helped himself in greedy haste. Herr von Andergast gave him a match, and lit a cigarette himself, and for a while they looked at one another in silence as they smoked. Herr von Andergast was thinking hard. Finally, as though he had begun to harbour doubts, and wanted to recover his bearings, he ejaculated the question: "If I am to assume that you did not fire the shot—though of course I cannot assume it; I am only trying to get your point of view—who, from your point of view, could have fired it?" A friendly, encouraging smile played about his lips; the violet-blue eyes were beaming with an almost kindly expression. Maurizius stared at him. He raised his eyebrows contemptuously, so that a deep furrow appeared in his forehead. Perhaps a minute and a half elapsed, while his face became overcast with a gloom that seemed to cover a sort of silent fury. Was it the question which had been asked thousands and thousands of times in the same tone, with the same scepticism, in the same triumphant manner, the manner of the judge and executioner, which had so affected him? Hardly. He had learned patience. He had learned to know the patience of his questioners. He had become hardened and deaf to it. The question no longer struck home; it no longer enticed anything from him, no longer released anything. Never to answer it, under no torture of body or soul to answer it, not even with a glance or a breath or a gesture to answer it; that had been his resolve for eighteen years and seven months. They were biting on granite. But it was not that. He suddenly understood:

there sat his enemy. Not a yard away from you is the condemner, the destroyer, superhumanly pitiless; not merely his representative (and many such had come), but actually the man himself. A dispensation and incarnation of destiny. The whole outer world, concentrated in one individual; the world, humanity, the law, the sentence: all that he had suffered, all that he had brooded over in this room, all the eternal present, all the sleepless nights, the humiliations, the deprivations, the despair, the fear of death, the desire for death, the lust of life and the lust of the flesh, the theft of his whole life: it was all embodied in this one man. He felt horribly close to him, as close as one sometimes appears to be to one's innate adversary in a dream. To settle accounts with him was like the fulfilment of a desire unconsciously cherished for eighteen and a half years. But he must control himself; he must be calm. He must not allow the man who once was within him to rise. He felt that with the man before him he would have time. He said quietly: "A judge ought to prove my guilt to me. That I should have to prove my innocence to him, when I can't do so, is contrary to the tendency of the world. There are nations who have recognized this long ago, and they are the greater for it. Better justice, better people."

6

Herr von Andergast rose and went to the window. Crushing his cigarette-end against the window-sill, he considered his next move. He felt confused; to a certain extent even helpless. With well-assumed anxiety he said: "We shan't get any farther like this. You have fortified yourself, which was of course to be expected. I don't propose to outdo the clerical gentlemen. It would be a mistaken enterprise, as matters stand. Since my visit, as I have already said, is unofficial, I will not even allow myself to cast a doubt on your statements. Otherwise I might reply: a fiction with which one has resolved to live is a tyrant who has forgotten how to see and hear. But let's drop all that. I had thought of coming to an understanding." He was silent for a few moments, in order to study the effect of his words, but Maurizius

did not move, and made no reply. Herr von Andergast accordingly continued, and it was apparent from the tone of his voice that he was greatly irritated: "In respect of the administration of justice in our country, you are mistaken. Like most laymen. That the evidence of guilt is to be adduced by the judge is expressly prescribed by law. Everyone is regarded as innocent until his guilt has been indisputably established. That is one of our fundamental juridical principles, and there is no court which would disregard it."

Maurizius raised his head a little. His attitude and his expression were full of silent irony. He smiled; perhaps at the juridically involved phrasing of "in respect of the administration of justice"; perhaps at the didactic tone in which an institution was defended which (save in dusty pandects) had its bloodless and illusive being only in the brains of men who built up concepts out of letters, with which they thereupon entered into a spectral symbiosis. He said, shrugging his shoulders, "It is so written. That can't be denied. A good many things are written. But will you assert that it is carried out? Where? When? By whom? On whom? I hope you don't think that I am talking of my own experience, that I am judging from my own fate. I don't count here at all. My fiction: well, well. Do you really regard it as a thing that makes one blind and deaf? It must be a consolation to you to tell yourself that this so-called fiction has prevented me for eighteen and a half years from seeing clearly what has gone on and is going on around me. In this world. In such a world." He had spoken quite dispassionately, with an exhausted coldness rather than impetuously, but he had risen to his feet and had moved a step forward. "In such a world"; that sounded as though it came out of the bowels of the earth, out of an utter darkness, and yet without any emphasis, because the cry had already been repeated a million times, and no longer had any hope of being heard. Lacing the middle fingers of both hands together like the links of a chain, a gesture that seemed habitual, the result of lonely brooding, he stared steadily, with his coffee-brown eyes, at Herr von Andergast's chin; no higher than his chin, and this was extraordinarily

unpleasant to Herr von Andergast; it was, somehow, as though he were being measured by too low a standard. "As I have said, I am not referring to my personal circumstances," Maurizius resumed. "For me, of course, my fate is just as important as the whole solar system; as experience it is, nevertheless, only an isolated case. But I have not had only the one experience; I have had a thousand. I have heard of a thousand judges; I have seen a thousand before me; I have been able to observe the work of thousands; and it is always one and the same judge. From the very first he is the enemy. For him the deed has been done; he takes the human being at his lowest. The accuser is his god, the accused his victim, punishment his aim. If one has come to the point of appearing before a judge one is done for. Why? Because the judge forestalls one's outlawry. With incredulity, with sarcasm, with contempt, with pollution. If his victim is intractable he subjects him to a moral pressure that ends by branding him. It is the work of a virtuoso. The law demands that he should use fair scales; yes, but without hesitation he throws his whole weight into the scale in which the deed lies. Who has authorized him straightway to identify the deed and the doer, and what empowers him not merely to condemn the doer—well, let him condemn him; it is perhaps his duty—but to take vengeance on him? A judge! Of old the word had an exalted meaning. The noblest in human society. I have known men who have told me that at every trial they have had the same horrible feeling in their bowels as when one suddenly finds oneself on the brink of a deep abyss. Every cross-examination depends on the exploitation of tactical advantages, which are, for the most part, just as dishonestly conceived as the subterfuges of the victim at bay. But the judge and the State attorney claim the faculty of omniscience, and to question their omniscience means unchaining their lust for revenge to the point of hopelessness; so that only the hypocrite, the cynic or the utterly broken man can hope for mercy at their hands. How then can one have a just decision? Where is the protection which your law prescribes? The law is only a pretext for the cruel institutions created in its name; and how can one be expected to bow down

before a judge who turns a guilty human being into a maltreated beast? The beast howls and rages and bites, and the people outside shudder and say: thank God that we are rid of him. It is a terrible way of getting rid of him, so much they admit; some of them, at least; but they maintain that it cannot be changed. It all comes to this: that those who live in heaven have no conception of hell, even though one tells them about it from morning to night. There all imagination fails. Only he can understand who is in it."

"You are using a bludgeon," said Herr von Andergast, with a certain displeasure in his tone. "The results of crime in the soul of the criminal cannot be made a reproach to the community. The justice of a punishment cannot be measured by its subjective endurability, nor by the behaviour of the instruments which dictate it. In the end, every human institution is drawn, by the persons who administer it, out of the realm of ideas into that of imperfect practice; we must seek the closest possible approximation, that is all. The suffering that lies between these two, even the most pitiful suffering, may perhaps justify indignation, but it cannot undo the whole structure. Since you cannot expect to win me over to your side you are wasting your time by such outbursts. Or rather, you are wasting my time, which is in this case much more regrettable." Maurizius's lips twitched sarcastically. His expression seemed to say: I know that words are vain; why all these words? And yet there was something about the man at the window that excited him. He felt obliged to keep his eyes on him; he did not dare to look away for a moment. The voice which came from the window sounded as though it came through a megaphone; which, of course, was an illusion, born of his sick, exasperated nerves, his pathologically distorted sense of hearing; for Herr von Andergast spoke with a restraint that allowed for the small size of the room, yet with a coldness which was only more evident for his attempt to appear benevolent. "What do you want, then?" asked Maurizius, hoarsely, letting his head fall on his breast, as almost every convict does when he is about to accept the decision of a person in authority. Herr von Andergast replied,

eagerly, as though he were really relieved by this question: "I will tell you. Little as I am interested in your theoretical point of view, I am greatly interested in all that concerns you personally. To be frank: I have, during the last few weeks, gone into your case rather thoroughly. I had, naturally, quite a definite picture of you. I had, of course, abundant opportunity to observe you and form definite conclusions. My recent study of the records has not modified the picture in any essential. Well, I come here and I see a man who has not the slightest resemblance to the Maurizius of 1905. We will not go into the reasons. We could consider the time which has elapsed as a factor only if I knew what changes had occurred in myself. You may assume, then, that I do not bear much resemblance to the attorney-general Andergast of those days. But I should like to know whether you remember yourself as you were then, and the relation of that picture to reality. I should like also to know, if possible, how the fifteen- or sixteen-year-old Leonhart Maurizius is reflected in the man of to-day; or, to compromise a little, what the man of twenty-five thought about the youth of sixteen. I should very much like to know that. For then, I believe, we might obtain useful results in respect of your personal evolution."

Maurizius listened intently. Why did he say "useful results"? was the first thought that flashed through his mind; how reserved he is, how vaguely he expresses himself! The man at the window was growing more mysterious; yet suddenly he found himself looking into his heart. He detected an admixture of self-assurance and uncertainty, of autocracy and weakness, of impregnability and dull reluctant resistance, which surprised him extremely. People like Maurizius possess a very much acuter sensibility than those who are dulled by constant contact with others; to them the very atmosphere conveys the most intimate secrets. He considered a while.

"There was at that time a famous French novel, *Peint par eux-mêmes*," he said presently; "Waremmé brought it to us. We read it. We, that is to say, I and . . . but that is irrelevant. I remember—it was very well done—how the characters revealed

themselves in their letters to one another, without really meaning to do so. The whole action of the book went like clockwork; a vice elicited a virtue; the desire for revenge drove cowardice onwards. It is generally so. The best mirror is that in which a man betrays himself while luring another into the net. . . . Excuse all this talk; I have always to think of so many things at once. When I begin to talk my thoughts go flying in all directions, like a flock of startled pigeons. What you are asking really surprises me. I don't think you need employ such a circuitous means of obtaining knowledge of me. At that time, at any rate, you got hold of all that was worth knowing about my life; that is, the facts; the rest was an amazing deduction. You had really no need of my actual self; on the contrary, I might have disturbed your mental labours." The biting sarcasm of these words caused Herr von Andergast to throw back his head with a haughty gesture. But since Maurizius was still standing with his eyes on the floor, the warning remained unobserved, and the speaker continued: "There is a portrait of me at twenty-six which I can describe for you faithfully, and which you will recognize, for it was drawn by yourself. On the twenty-first of August, 1906, in the court-room, it was . . . shall I say exhibited? Exhibited? Well, it was a portrait in words. Do you wish to hear them? Listen: 'A man of great intellectual capacity and great culture, surrendering with the faintest conceivable resistance to the temptations of a period of decay and of imminent moral collapse. Let us note the symptoms, gentlemen of the jury. We must not let the individual divert us from the symptoms, nor the specific crime to mask the far more dangerous tendency which produces it, and against which you have to erect an effective barrier. Rarely is there so favourable an opportunity to isolate the malady of a nation, indeed of a whole continent, in a characteristic representative of the entire destiny of a period, and by a resolute operation, not indeed to cure it, but to prevent its further propagation. . . .' Am I correct? I believe I am. I believe I am almost letter-perfect. But that was only the frame of the portrait. The face itself was far more terrible. You are probably wondering at the perfect functioning of my

memory. There aren't many people, you are probably saying to yourself, who are capable of repeating an oral judgment, word for word, after so long a time. After so long a time. Yes. If someone were to assure me that it was eighteen hundred years ago instead of eighteen I should hardly wish to quarrel about the difference. Such conceptions are effaced . . . months . . . years . . . they are no longer real. . . . Well, formerly, when they refused to give me books, and particularly on winter nights, when the lights are put out at six o'clock, I would lie awake till three and four in the morning, delving into the past as into a house that has collapsed. I took pains, then, not to forget that speech; I might have written down every word when it was spoken, but I could rely on my memory better than on anything else. When I had repeated all that I knew by heart of Shakespeare and Goethe, then came the speech. Well, to continue: 'We must see clearly. Our purpose requires of us the greatest effort of our inward vision. We must not permit ourselves to entertain the least psychological uncertainty as to the human aspect of the prisoner, and, without presumption, solely because it is my ineluctable duty, I declare that I can dispose of any such doubts as you may entertain; for the key to the situation, which may not appear quite clear to you, is to be found in the character, the convictions, the moral development of the culprit himself. Faithlessness and irresponsibility are the motives of his actions. These led him into the maze of his desires, which may also have been a place of torment—I will assume that it was, for the honour of human nature—and thereafter lifted him above all the obligations of society, of the family, and of the accepted order of things. Pleasure was the siren call that bewitched and stunned his senses; and the price he paid for it was all that he had won, all that he had accomplished, all that he had become: his heart, his mind, and the hearts of those who loved him; his ideals, his future; and when at last he had nothing left to pay he became a murderer. Let us not wrong, let us not discourage those of our fellows who are honestly striving; it is only those who have broken as adventurers into the realm of the intellect, bartering their vanity for the guarded treasure which

the unsuspecting guardians deliver to them—it is only those who squander its prizes thus. Every aspiration towards a noble goal was to him a rung on the ladder of his ambition; and in his frivolous hands the holiest things became the currency with which he purchased his meretricious prestige. Knowledge was for him no more than a carnival in which he danced, wearing a mask designed to elicit confidence; nothing was serious to him; nothing had a deeper meaning; and when, finally, he married a woman who was infinitely his moral superior, he was shattered against the noble metal of her character like a mass of brittle stone. And this was a hindrance to him; the shame which he felt in her presence was a hindrance; the latent reproach which she embodied was destroying his self-assurance; the sight of her grief when she was forced to recognize that her struggle to save him had been in vain, that the battle for his soul had ended in her defeat, was poisoning his blood. The vicious weaklings who appear before the world with a glittering veneer are unwilling that anyone should see through them; they wish to be accepted for the mysterious and seductive comedians which they are in their own self-enamoured eyes; and so things happened—as they happened. The unfortunate woman was fated to be destroyed by him; it was written in the physical and social constellation; and he would have got rid of her even if his desperate material circumstances had not made him snatch at the last horrible means, even if his crazy and hopeless passion for her sister had not robbed him of the last vestiges of reason and honour. . . .’ Maurizius drew a deep breath. His temples were covered with little beads of sweat. “I am quoting correctly?” he asked, with a sort of honeyed courtesy, his head leaning to one side. “It was a bold diversion, it was a master-stroke, to expose the motives just where they were most inaccessible to men of the people. That you should attribute to them such an exalted standpoint flattered them and made them pliable. Till then they had thought that this . . . this passion was the only motive. Now they saw something far more infernal; now they saw a murder decreed by fate. A thing predestined; there was no need to rack their brains about the matter. You

also spoke of God, I believe? You felt that you must recapitulate the individual components of this scoundrel, that you must prove philosophically what you called the disorganization of his soul. Whither are we steering with such a crew aboard, you exclaimed; and, referring to a certain superstition common among seamen, you prophesied that the wrath of heaven would descend upon the vessel if that gangrened member were not amputated. God has cast him out, you said; why should we spare him? A temerarious statement: you could not possibly know whether God had really cast me out. But under the influence of your splendid eloquence they were like school-children when one of them is punished; they all look as virtuous and attentive as though they were immaculate angels. They are positively relieved by the infliction of the penalty."

Maurizius sat down again on the iron bed; he sat with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands, covering his eyes and forehead. There he remained, bowed and cowering. Herr von Andergast, leaning against the window-frame with his arms folded, observed him with a cold curiosity behind which lurked a feeling akin to fear. The repetition, almost word-perfect, of a speech delivered nearly half a generation ago, filled him with amazement; but the most singular thing was that nothing in the speech seemed familiar or even known to him, the author, although he could judge, with a fair degree of certainty, that Maurizius had not altered or distorted his words; it was rather that it seemed to him an alien thing, something unsympathetically and even disagreeably alien, exaggerated, full of rhetorical phrases and forced antitheses. As he looked down on the cowering convict his dislike of his own oratory, which he had just heard on this man's lips, grew into a physical disgust, so that he had at last to struggle with an actual nausea; he had to clench his teeth convulsively. It was as though his words were creeping along the wall like worms, slimy, colourless, hideous and evil. If all achievement was so ephemeral, so perishable, so questionable, how should any man endure? If a truth for which one had once been willing to vouch before God and man could after a time become

a ridiculous caricature, how did it stand with "truth" in general? Or was it only that something in him was so rotten that the structure of his ego was breaking down? If so, how dangerous, how equivocal it was that he should be here, that he should have sought this interview! It was like a cunning attempt to stab himself from behind. He pulled out his watch, and touched the spring of the cover; it was five minutes past four. But the idea of picking up his hat and taking his leave with professional dignity, and going home without having accomplished his purpose, seemed to him utterly senseless.

He stood there with his arms folded, waiting.

7

"You are quite right," said Maurizius finally, from behind his upraised forearms, from which the sleeves of his canvas jacket had slipped back. "It was a good idea of yours to remind me that even I was once sixteen. I have not thought of that for a long time. You are doubtless right, also, as to one's being the product of one's generation; that is clear to me now for the first time, when I think of what Leonhart Maurizius was like at sixteen. In all those things in which one believes that one differs from him the differences are as slight as those between the leaves of the same tree. Each generation is a species of its own, and is represented by a different tree. I should like to know what the boys of sixteen of to-day are like. Do you know any? Well, you'd hardly want to tell me about them. It is a tragic age. It is the great watershed of life. Very often one's whole future depends on a single incident at that time of life. The years pass, and one has forgotten it, but it suddenly emerges, and one sees that one has been led into a particular path by such an incident. When I was in the second form of the gymnasium I agreed with some of the fellows to go with them to a brothel. I had been ^ma virgin up ⁿtill ^othen; I hardly knew what a woman was, whereas the others had already had their experiences; some of them spoke of love and ^pwomen like disillusioned rakes. I went with them because I was ^qashamed to insist on my innocence; so of course I behaved as though I were

particularly audacious and enterprising. When we got to the house a girl took me to her room; I followed like a lamb to the slaughter; when we were alone I fell on my knees before her and begged her not to do me any harm; at first she laughed herself almost to death; then she seemed to take pity on me; she pulled me down on her lap, was tender and affectionate, and began to cry. That cut me to the heart. I asked her how she had come to that place; she told me her story; one of those sentimental yarns that almost all prostitutes spin for novices, and sometimes for other confiding customers, and which are apparently invented and broadcast by the dozen because they are so often effective. I believed every word; I was burning with indignation and pity; and she talked herself into her romance until she fairly melted with emotion. Not only did I give her all the money I had with me, but I even swore to free her from her terrible life, to arrange that she should live a life worthy of a human being. I succeeded in getting a considerable sum of money from my father; a hundred and twenty or a hundred and thirty marks, if I remember rightly; with that I bought the girl off and rented a room in the suburbs, to which I took her. I went to see her every day; I devoted every free hour to her; I placed all my pocket money at her disposal; I chose suitable books for her—mostly *belles-lettres*!—I read aloud to her, talked to her about what she had read herself, and imagined, in my idiocy, that I could educate her, ennoble her, and restore her to society purified. She was really a nice little thing, rather pretty, very young, and certainly not bad. There was no sensual relation between us, and I was so strict about this that I avoided touching her hand; not, indeed, because I was indifferent to her; no, I was convinced that I loved her, but I wanted to convince her that mine was a ‘pure love’. I was always talking about ‘pure love’; she listened patiently; I thought it was a revelation to her; whereas, I need hardly say, she was laughing at the stupid boy, and was bored to death. I can still see that dark basement room; if you looked out of the window you saw the legs of the passers-by; next door there was a carpenter’s shop, and one heard the swishing of his plane.

She would sit on a sofa in the corner, looking at me with an empty astonishment whose significance I did not understand; or she would laugh shyly, and I could not interpret the laugh, because I was inflated with my own enthusiastic illusions. Well, to come to the end of it: one day I discovered that she was carrying on her old profession, quite unconcernedly, and while I was weaving my dreams of saving her soul she was taking men home night after night. It took me a long time to recover from the blow. Perhaps, as a matter of fact, one never recovers from such a thing. Well, that was the boy of sixteen. The romantic Maurizius. Not yet the Satan whom you depicted ten years later. A romanticist *pur sang*; without a flaw. Painful and earnest. And that, after all, was the trouble: my youth was passed beneath a theatrical heaven. Those who were born about eighteen eighty had a hard time of it when they were young. From one's home and one's school one got all that was necessary for a bourgeois existence, and for the so-called higher life; one's fundamental principles and ideals, one's monthly allowance—and anyone who hadn't that was of no account—and one's education. But it was all threadbare, it was all full of holes; only the allowance, that was something solid; the rest was tinsel and cheap imitation, from the Christmas and wedding presents to the enthusiasm for antiquity and the Renaissance, from the regulated students' drinking-bouts and the patriotic celebrations to the 'throne and altar'. I was not conscious of this; I was no rebel; I enjoyed life too much; I did not trouble my head about universal values; and yet somehow or other one is conscious of it, since one is a component part of the whole. But in those years everything was self-existent and isolated, and anyone who did not definitely break with his environment and traditions—and there were of course those who did—was gradually entangled and smothered; he had his moments of depression, but there were ways of dealing with them. Life, of course, was terribly insipid; one felt a sort of gloomy suspense; it was as though one's soul had been immured, and the only compensation one received was a shabby little career, and the few friends to whom one clung with all one's might. The germs of nobility

in one's own character were so fortuitously scattered; they had no coherence; and that was 'romantic.' 'Romanticism' was a category in itself, apart; a religion almost; and one could be 'romantic' and have very little conscience. I can still remember that at nineteen I came home from a performance of *Tristan* a new man, a happy man; and then I stole twenty marks out of my father's desk. The two things were compatible. They always were compatible. To swear to a girl a sacred oath that one would marry her, only to desert her and leave her to her fate, and to read with exaltation of the life and works of Buddha. To cheat a poor tailor out of his earnings, and to stand enthralled before a Raphael Madonna. One might be tremendously moved at a performance of Hauptmann's *Weavers*, and read with satisfaction that the strikers in the Ruhr had been fired on. The two things were always compatible, always possible. Romanticism. Romanticism, without foundation and without a goal. There you have another portrait. A self-portrait. Do you think it is more flattering than yours? Its only redeeming quality is that in my case it admits of two possibilities. Yours is cruelly implacable because it admits only of one."

Confronted by this passionately analytical urge to confess, which set the whole content of a life in motion, as when a dam breaks and the waters rush over the banks, Herr von Andergast was suddenly possessed by a feeling of cowardly reluctance: the dread of a truth which one has persuaded oneself that one is seeking, but which one secretly hopes one will not find. Such states of mind are not very unusual. They are an epitome of an age in which "two things are possible", as the convict Maurizius had put it; he was mistaken only in that he attributed this characteristic exclusively to his own age and generation. Or was his fear inspired merely by that underlying sarcasm of which he had already been so uncomfortably conscious? Hardly. Before him cowered a tormented creature, panting to express himself, longing with feverish eagerness to be heard, ready to pour himself out, to reveal himself, to testify, to know, to speak, to shake off this formless, grinding loneliness, and to reassume his true shape,

Herr von Andergast observed, evasively and at random, since the other was silent: "Quite right. But for me there was only one possibility." Maurizius lifted his head and stared at him with a disconsolate expression. "And supposing your hypothesis had been false?" he asked, looking up keenly. Herr von Andergast replied, brusquely: "That is unthinkable."—"Unthinkable? Splendid. I only ask: supposing? And you can't even suppose? And nevertheless supposing it were false?"

"Does that seem thinkable to you?"

"Perhaps."

"Then why were you silent? During the preliminary investigation; during the trial; in the penitentiary; eighteen and a half years?"

"Shall I tell you why?" (Again that dark, watchful upward glance, as from a man in ambush.)

"Yes, if you please."

"Because I did not wish to commit murder."

"What . . . ? What's that? Because you I do not understand!"

"God forbid that you should understand!" (The words were spoken with a faint, sarcastic smile.)

Herr von Andergast, apparently at a loss, mechanically pulled out his watch and touched the spring of the cover. Two minutes to five.

8

Suddenly Maurizius sprang to his feet. "Nonsense," he exclaimed, "what twaddle I am talking! Forget my infernal chatter. I only wanted to hear what you had to say. It is an idea with which I have sometimes played. I ought not to think aloud. I hope you are not taking it seriously." He stood there with narrowed shoulders. Herr von Andergast, as though to soothe the excited man, remarked quietly that there was no question of taking notes; he was perfectly well able to differentiate between a confession, even the shadow of a confession, and the usual attempt to go off on a false track. This was a deliberate insult; it was intended to anger

Maurizius, to put him on the defensive. But Maurizius gave a sigh of relief. "Silent!" he said to himself, clenching the fists of his loosely hanging hands; "after all, what could one do but be silent? The sole intention of the whole procedure is to destroy human dignity. One's only resource is silence. Defiance hardens a man, stifles him; one is silent out of defiance; the only means by which one can retain a poor remnant of human pride is defiance." His eyes were fixed; they were gazing into the distant past; his mind seemed to be full of kaleidoscopic events which lay far apart in time, so that a word, a dream, an image of yesterday might suddenly fall into place beside one of twenty years ago. Herr von Andergast again very quietly stated that he had never seen anyone persist in his defiance, when his head, his life, his happiness was at stake. That was precisely the point of the legal procedure which Maurizius had so contemptuously criticized: that it stripped the accused of his vanity, so that he stood, as it were, naked before the deed, naked before the judge. Maurizius emitted a nasal, malicious little laugh. "Wonderful!" he exclaimed: "what admirable subtlety! Naked before the warders, naked before the police commissioner, naked before the turnkeys, naked before the clerks and reporters! But that isn't what matters, the being naked; that's beside the point; it isn't that at all." He was standing in a corner of the cell, restlessly gesticulating. (This restlessness of his was the only thing that reminded one of the man as he was before the years of his imprisonment.) With that convulsive opening and shutting of his hands he seemed to be seizing and crushing in his grasp all the unforgettable degradation which he had had to endure from the moment of his arrest to the passing of sentence. The coarse bullying tone of subordinate officials, or, worse still, their insinuating familiarity. To fall into such hands meant to lose all claim to respect. Refinement elicited their sarcasm; intellectual superiority their hatred. Achievement and merit no longer counted; what you were before yesterday was effaced. At last they were privileged to snub one of those who at other times enjoyed the privilege of snubbing them, and they indulged it with malicious pleasure. Did he deny his guilt? A

cunning trick. Suspicion is suspicion. Suspicion is as good as proof. Here, if possible, they surpassed their superiors, being less responsible. Moreover, they were inspired by class hatred, for they were all convinced that rich and educated persons, in spite of all the talk about equality before the law, were secretly conspiring against the poor and ignorant, and they were eager, under the protection of that law, to vent their rancour. When he was arrested in the Hamburg hotel the policeman had ordered him to get out of bed; he would not allow him to dress, but made him stand in his shirt while he searched all his clothes and examined all his papers and letters. For many years this man's bulldog face had been one of the hideous images with which his imagination tortured him; he could still see the contemptuous expression with which the fellow had rummaged through his fine linen; his nod of suppressed envy and gratified vengeance, a mean, lower middle-class nod that revealed a whole world, as he examined the gold cigarette-case and the things on the dressing-table. Then the first night in prison, in the company of an old procurer and a syphilitic thief; the food, the dish of pulpy turnips sullenly thrust before him, the stench, the dirt, the sudden and utter degradation; the green police-van, and the train journey with the two policemen, who were already trying to trap him with clumsy questions; the remand during the investigation; the examining magistrate, who already knew all about everything, the crime, the circumstances and the motives, who was armed against every objection, and received the most plausible explanations with the smile of one who knows better; who conducted examination after examination, morning, noon and night, torturing him with questions until his brain throbbed in his head like a raw wound, and even laying illegitimate pitfalls for him. Then followed the attempt to intimidate him by severity, to wear down his resistance by exaggerated clemency; first threats and then promises; and the employment of fellow-prisoners as spies and eavesdroppers. The whole apparatus of underground justice was set to work, intimidating the witnesses, and indefatigably weaving a web whose pattern was already prescribed; a web which must be

woven, because the apparatus was created for and adjusted to that very purpose. He longed for the final release, even for the sentence, with all the remaining strength of his exhausted heart; he could no longer hear, or see, or feel; he no longer wished to struggle; he had surrendered; he had nothing more to say. He had become indifferent to everything, so that the penitentiary into which he disappeared was like the healing peace of the tomb; at least, for the first few weeks. No more questions, no more hostile witnesses to puzzle one, no more persuasive lawyers, no more rumours, no more fears, no more taking of oaths, no more signing of documents under the stress of torture, but only the balm of peace.

"It is perhaps the most astonishing pyramidal system of human energies which can be conceived," said Maurizius quietly, almost sadly. "I admit that readily. Yes, I admit that. It's enormously clever. When one has reached the top, the delinquent lies crushed to death at the bottom. I won't deny that there are well-meaning and compassionate people with decent feelings in this army of hunters and huntsmen. That would be ungrateful; above all, here in this prison there were a few whose kindness and friendliness were a real comfort to me. There was, for example, a certain Mathisson, who was discharged six years ago because he gave a dying prisoner a letter from his fiancée; he always used to console me, saying: 'Patience, Doctor'—he always called me Doctor—'don't lose confidence. Your day of justice will come!' He really helped me, even though I did not share his faith. No, there was no justification for that. Yes, and above all there was one . . . but I can't talk about him. . . . And how rare such people are, and how afraid they are, how carefully they have to conceal their humane impulses; for to show affection, or even compassion, is to offend against discipline; and since such a tendency soon becomes a subject of gossip, one has naturally to be very careful. If one remembers that all these people—and not only these, for the same thing is true of those higher up, I shouldn't like to say how high—if one realizes that these people make one pay, make one suffer for everything that secretly embitters them, for all

that they have failed to attain, for the wretchedness in their homes, for their miserable pay, for their social degradation, and sometimes for their shipwrecked lives; if one remembers that the subordinates among them are nearly all people who take pleasure in oppressing others and making them suffer, and that they can't help it; that they are intoxicated with power, and that this power consoles them, for their lives are as dark as the prisons which they guard; then one is forced to ask whether human beings are fitted to judge and to punish other human beings. What is the actual meaning, as things now stand, of punishment? Who dares to punish? Who has the right? One pronounces the word; another repeats it; the machine seizes you, and you find yourself under the wheels; that is punishment. It is a monstrous sham. A cursed pretence." He breathed deeply, like a child after sobbing. "But I am making a nuisance of myself," he continued in a dissatisfied tone, as though he were annoyed by his own garrulity; "but it is so seldom that one can speak directly to anyone at the head of affairs. The summit stands in the light and does not know what is down below." A pale, flickering glance, in which aggression, self-restraint and wild defiance were commingled, flashed upon Herr von Andergast. Curiously enough, the latter accepted the convict's informal manner of addressing him without his title. Perhaps he did not feel that it was worth while to insist on a show of respect. It seemed almost as though he had forgotten his office, and the barrier of dignity that should have stood between them. With a sense of angry constraint, he listened to the other's words. There were moments when he—like Maurizius—felt that his presence here, his confrontation of this man, and their hostile attitude, was like the adjustment of a slow accumulation of explosive tensions. He was beginning to doubt himself, to wonder whether he would be able to hold his own. *Maurizius v. Andergast*: perhaps a final settlement? Well, one would see.

He strode across the cell, to the door and back, and halted close to Maurizius. "All that, of course," he said, "is very bad. But you are generalizing too much. Admitting these abuses, they grow out of the world; and the world, as we know it, is insensitive; it

is not kindly. I don't want to gloss things over. Let us get at the root of the matter. You cannot believe that I am so stupid as to believe the reason you assign for your eighteen years of consistent silence. Or do you? You have been trying to evade the subject. Nevertheless, you have given yourself away. You say it was because you did not wish to commit murder. That was your reason. It is an astonishing argument in the mouth of a condemned murderer. Never mind. That was only a marginal gloss. To whom does the observation point? The riddle, I think, is easily solved. Well, then: Anna Jahn was to be spared. Spared in what respect? Why spared? Don't take it back; don't do that; perhaps God Himself has got it out of you. Yes, God Himself. Don't be afraid. Speak freely. . . ."

Herr von Andergast could not help feeling a little uncomfortable at the emotional tone of his appeal. Maurizius had joined him in his walk to and fro; the slow movements of his head were like those of a dog who is determined not to lose sight of his master for a moment. He listened; he opened his mouth a little; his small teeth were bared; he listened again, and dropped his eyelids. "Now you think you have caught me," he muttered angrily; and immediately afterwards, in a changed voice, he asked, gently and humbly: "Is it very presumptuous of me to beg for another cigarette?" Herr von Andergast hastened to offer him his open case, and gave him a light. Maurizius drew the smoke deep into his lungs and expelled it through his nostrils. Herr von Andergast sat down at the table and crossed his legs. He looked now just as he looked during the prescribed evening talks with Etzel; the kindly friend who is prepared to discuss any interesting problem. But his glance wandered imperceptibly; his forehead was flushed. Once more the two men looked at one another in silence. Herr von Andergast, in the midst of this silence, wondered whether Sophia had arrived yet. It worried him to imagine her expression when she appeared before him to demand her son. There was nothing so difficult that he would not do it if only he could escape this ordeal. Fortunately his task here was sufficiently difficult.

"Didn't you ever make any notes?" Herr von Andergast began with a question. His patience and composure, the result of concentrated self-control, were gradually affecting Maurizius like some soothing drug. "I have never felt the impulse to do so," he replied. "Why? for whom? When I was given permission to write, towards the end of 1911, I preferred to devote myself to my own special studies; but since I lacked material I was obliged to deal with general subjects. I had been turned in upon myself too long; it had made me quite blind. I ought to have made someone understand that . . . but I can't. One can't do it. The body becomes an auger, boring into some hideous mass. . . . What I meant to say was . . . yes, for several months I wrote on a particular subject, a history of Mariolatry, based on the representation of the Madonna in art. I arrived at some peculiar results while I was doing so, even with regard to my own life. As I wrote, I translated my work simultaneously into Italian and Spanish; I had always been very fond of both languages. For a time I even played with the idea of publication; I thought such a thing possible; I believed it might help me. But only for a while. At heart I was long past that sort of pastime when a new director came, Colonel Gutkind: *nomen non est omen*. He forbade me to write, and confiscated my books; I was even expected to give up my manuscript. He was not well disposed to me, the Colonel; I was a veritable thorn in his flesh; why, I have never been able to make out. I did not attempt to plead or negotiate; I simply destroyed the manuscript. Since then I have had no heart for that sort of thing."

"Not a word of this proceeding came to my ears," said Herr von Andergast, with contracted brows.

"I can well believe that. What does become known? Even a man like yourself would be a little horrified if he knew all the things which do not become known. This Colonel nearly finished me with his ingenious torments; I don't see who could have prevented him, if he had not been carried off by a stroke. Otherwise . . . nothing in the world would have moved him. It simply

was not written in the stars that I was to be his victim. Well, after that I pulled sea-grass again, pasted boxes, made bast cord, wove mats, and all through 1916 I sewed buttons on military cloaks."

"I should greatly value some kind of autobiography if you could make up your mind to write one. I promise myself a great deal from it. It might, under certain circumstances, serve the purpose at which I hinted at the beginning of our conversation. I should give the superintendent instructions; you could count on all possible facilities. . . ."

Maurizius's face showed that he was looking for the trap behind the offer. He shook his head. "My life is a burned-out tree," he replied; "what point would there be in counting the annular rings in the ashes of the stump, or in writing querulous meditations on the height once attained by the blossoming crown? No!"

"Don't misunderstand me; I don't want to bring any pressure to bear," Herr von Andergast assured him, with an earnestness which was in some degree an indication of a new conception of the situation; and he must first of all account for this in his own mind. "It is no longer even a confession with which I am concerned, as I see matters at the moment. . . ."—"But rather. . . ?"—Herr von Andergast, drawing down his head between his shoulders, waved his arms as though trying, regardless of consequences, to express the uncertainty into which he had fallen. Nothing could have made a more profound impression on Maurizius than this silent gesture of renunciation. If it had not indeed been a sort of capitulation on Andergast's part, unpremeditated, and inspired by a momentary compulsion, by the sense that he was hopelessly wandering about in a circle, it would have been a brilliant move in the game.

Maurizius's face grew even paler than usual. He seemed to be unable to make up his mind about something that was causing him infinite distress, or something that he wanted to say and do but could not say, could not do. It was a long time since anyone from "outside" had visited his cell; for a long while no one had

spoken to him in his own language. In the space of a few seconds a host of conflicting sensations broke in upon him. But he could not retain one of them, for each was swept away by a stronger, more sinister, wilder, and more fearful emotion. Like one who had been long marooned on a rocky, desert island, longing for a human face and voice, he was capable of forgetting that the man who finally approached him as an equal was also the man who had condemned him and made him an outcast; so tremulously, so feverishly did he long for mere physical proximity, for speech, for the exchange of thoughts. To give news; to receive news; it was almost the same thing; perhaps the exchange of ideas would help him to struggle out of the frightful mental malady which his solitude and confrontation with himself had become.

"But do sit down." He heard the words, and he sat down, obediently, suddenly, as though pushed down. His eyes, filled with irrational melancholy, had a phosphorescent glow which seemed to speak of spiritual decay. Three or four months more, and the last inner spark would be extinguished; the unprecedented energy with which he had hitherto fought against this decay would be exhausted. This man who spoke to him like a human being, who restored to him the conception of a human being, who had set him again in the frame of the world—he could live another year on the strength of this—he must hold him fast, must trap him, must open his heart to him; and for all his poor cunning he could hardly conceal his insane yearning.

And then the name of Anna Jahn was pronounced. Maurizius doubtless knew that Anna Jahn had married? Did he reply? He replied, though he seemed still to be considering the news. He had heard it eight years ago. To the question whether the news was unexpected, whether it made any change in his feelings, he replied with a smile. Or perhaps it was not a smile, but merely an attempt to pretend that he had forgotten; an unsuccessful attempt. Assuredly the name had never been uttered in that room before; the cell became twice its size, the table twice as high; his head seemed to swell, and he felt as though he were

inhaling a gas which had the property of exaggerating all dimensions. What did people know of these . . . these feelings? Well, one must credit his questioner with a certain degree of penetration.—Penetration! Nonsense! No penetration could go so deep.—Words were words; a man betrayed himself, whether he would or not. He had received the news from his father. It was in a letter. There were other things in the letter which the censorship had not permitted him to read. Probably there were further mentions of Anna Jahn. Since he had at first regarded the report as a lie, he felt no desire to hear the rest. It was only gradually that he had become accustomed to the thought, and had admitted the possibility to himself. Why not? Why should she not marry? Under what obligation was she to remain single? Should she have become a nun? Well, perhaps; perhaps a convent would have been the proper place for her. His father, of course, in his irrational hatred, had eagerly gathered up every calumny that had ever been published against her. A long time ago, perhaps it was fourteen or fifteen years ago, during one of his visits, he had hinted at something utterly abominable, namely, that she and Waremmé were supposed to have . . . but he would not repeat that; the old man was careful never to mention it again, apart from the fact that from that time onwards private conversations were very strictly supervised. But after that, when he made his half-yearly visits, the old man hardly knew what to talk about; he simply stood, in his pitiful misery, staring helplessly at his son. He had no longer the courage to allude to his crazy idea.

Judging by hearsay, Herr von Andergast commented drily, the Duvernion marriage had turned out quite happily.—“Duvernion? Oh, that’s the man’s name? Possibly.”—“There are said to be children. Two girls.” The hand on which Maurizius was supporting his chin trembled. “Children? Really children? Is it possible? Children? She said once that she never wanted to have any children.”—“At that time she was still half a child herself.”—“From that point of view she was of no age. She never said anything which was not in her character.”—“But she was the person who took the most conscientious interest in

your illegitimate child." Maurizius pressed his fingers to his eyes. His lips turned perfectly white. "Hildegard . . . yes," he whispered.—"Doesn't that relationship exist any longer? I mean, between Anna and your daughter?"—"That I don't know."—"What? . . . you don't know? . . . were you not told . . .?"—"No," shouted Maurizius. "Nothing! I was told nothing. I know nothing of my child!"

Herr von Andergast showed neither surprise nor indignation at this outburst of despair, which quickly died down again. He asked with sympathy for further details, and learned that Maurizius was obliged to promise Anna Jahn, through Dr. Volland, whom she had chosen as her go-between, that he would no longer interest himself in Hildegard; he must be dead to the child; under this condition Anna was willing to superintend her future education with all possible care. Herr von Andergast considered that this conquest of his own feelings, which had ensured peace of mind for the child, was worthy of praise, and he had no doubt that Anna Duvernion would feel bound to perform the duty which she had accepted, as scrupulously as had Anna Jahn. Maurizius twisted his neck as though he were being choked. Yes, yes. Possibly. But he wasn't sure. He ought to be sure. He ought to have some sign. Did he even know whether the girl was alive? How many, in the outside world, had died and rotted since then! Herr von Andergast was surprised by the passionate attachment of a convict sentenced to imprisonment for life to a child whom he had not seen since her infancy; indeed, it was possible that he had never seen her at all. It seemed to be a case of worshipping an imaginary creature; it was like casting an anchor into eternity. In a casual tone, as one might chat with an acquaintance over a cup of coffee, Herr von Andergast observed that Anna Jahn must in her youth—for of her later life little was known—have been a very difficult woman to understand; for example, the care and pains which she had always taken in respect of this child, the offspring of an illicit relation between her brother-in-law and a strange woman, had always seemed inexplicable to him. Maurizius was about to reply; then he pressed his lips together and was

silent, glancing shyly at the man before him. And then: "No," he said. "Not so inexplicable, if one considers what she had already been through, and what happened when she came to us. No one has any idea of that."—"Of course," admitted Herr von Andergast, "what we have heard is as perfunctory as the newspaper report of an accident. The realities, of course, are in the background."

For a long time Maurizius gazed at the floor in silence. Now and again he jerked his head nervously backwards, as though trying to ward off some unpleasant contact. But it was only a shadow. He lived with shadows; questioning them, contending with them. At length he lifted his eyes, gazing into the attorney-general's face, and said, in a voice that came from parched lips: "I will try to tell you. I believe it will be all right if only I can tell it. Up to a certain point, after all, I can risk it. If only to hear it myself for once. To see what is left of it. But not to-day. I am too exhausted. I have no longer control of myself. To-morrow. Quite early will be best."

Herr von Andergast nodded and rose. At the door of the cell he gave the signal and the warder opened it. It was half-past seven when he reached the inn at Kressa and ordered a room for the night. Sophia must wait, he reflected with a mixture of triumph and fear, as he sat at the window of his room, staring up at the grey prison citadel. But it was a fleeting thought, no longer of much importance. All thoughts were now ephemeral and unimportant that left the circle in which dwelt the convict Maurizius.

CHAPTER X

I

ETZEL, of course, understood at once that he had put himself into a position which threatened to become dangerous. It's as well that I should at last see his eyes, he thought, while moving, as a precautionary measure, into a somewhat remoter part of the room. They are not pleasant, those eyes; he has every reason to hide them; of what do they remind me? Lizards, or something repulsive! Ugh!—He was pale with suspense as to how the situation would develop. That he was at a disadvantage was obvious. He had raised his vizor, but his adversary had not done so. That they should still go to the meeting at the Stettiner station was presumably out of the question. Now they both had something else to think about.

Warschauer slowly put his glasses back on his nose. "Curious," he murmured, in a drawling voice, and with an expression as though he were boring a tunnel with his eyes into a past which had been completely blotted out. At the same time he was watching and examining the boy. "I have brought sausage and sprats," said Etzel, in a not wholly successful attempt to appear unconcerned, pointing to the package which still lay on the window-sill. "There is some bread in the table drawer, and butter too, I think; won't you have something to eat?"

Warschauer cleared his throat. "Shut the window, Mohl," he said, magisterially, in a curious, bullying tone: "it's getting cool." Etzel did as he was bidden; a moth fluttered against his face as he was closing the window; high above the roofs in the crimson dusk there was a flashing as of search-lights. Meanwhile he had recovered his courage; he picked up the parcel of food, cut the string, took two plates and a loaf of bread from the drawer, and busied himself in laying a rather dirty blue-checked table-cloth on the table, rattling the knives and forks, and preparing the coffee-boiler. Warschauer watched him awhile in silence; then he went into the alcove, leaving the sliding door open, and washed

his hands with his usual ceremoniousness. When he returned this is what happened:

He sat down and began to eat, seemingly without pleasure, withdrawn into himself. Etzel, who had assumed a more and more cheerful expression, as though he had long ago forgotten the mysterious little altercation, lit the lamp of the coffee-boiler, and with a spoon measured the coffee into a little tray. As he did so he counted aloud: one, two, three. While he was thus counting his heart was heavy with the thought that up to now he had not the slightest proof that this "Professor" Warschauer and Gregor Waremmé were one and the same person. He had relied solely on the statement of old Maurizius; but was that enough? It was true that an instinct had told him that he was on the right track the moment he caught sight of Warschauer; but he couldn't really be certain. The professor's obstinate silence filled him with a vague fear, which he must not let him see. He felt that everything depended on the first question and answer, and as he gazed at the flame of the spirit-lamp he devised a plan of attack. He, for his part, did not dare to break the silence, and he carefully refrained from appearing anxious or inquisitive; he only gazed attentively now into the flame, now into the coffee-pot. It was the respect, and even the foreboding awe which he felt before the figure of the professor that compelled him to adopt this attitude: the figure of the man as apprehended by a youthful intellect which set beside the vague and uncertain reality an organic image, a character self-contained as a poem, and even conceived this character in all its depth and breadth.

At last Warschauer laid his knife and fork aside, stuck his finger several times into his mouth, which Etzel thought disgusting, and then said, imperiously, almost in the tone of a command: "Well, now, what is it? How long am I to wait for an explanation, my dear Herr Mohl, or Herr Nobody, or whatever your name may be? Why have you been running after me? Who sent you? What's at the back of the whole business? Anyhow, here I am: George Warschauer, *alias* Gregor Waremmé. What do you want, young man?"

So there was no more doubt about that, thank God! But when the name was mentioned, Etzel jumped as at a shot, and he needed a few seconds to pull himself together. "In a moment, professor," he replied obligingly, with a quick, innocently serious smile. "Just a moment's patience, the water is almost boiling." While it was coming to the boil he could still consider what to say. Warschauer was drumming vaguely on the table with his short-nailed fingers. Etzel quietly continued to manipulate the coffee-boiler; at last he was ready; he poured the steaming beverage into a cup, and pushed it over to Warschauer. Then he leaned his elbows on the table, blinked a little, hesitated a little, and began to talk about old Maurizius. "An unhappy old man, professor. Have you any idea how old he is? Seventy-four. Incredible that such a man should still be alive. He insists that he won't die until his son Leonhart is let out of prison. Though there isn't the slightest prospect of that. Sentenced to imprisonment for life. Why should they let him out? But he has got it into his head, and nothing in the world will make him think otherwise." He began to enlarge on the subject, explaining very plausibly, and with characteristic details, that he had known the old man for years; his grandparents had lived next door to him for a time, and old Maurizius, who was generally so shy, had often visited them, and had talked for hours about nothing but his son, and the terrible fate which had overtaken him.

He had gradually become quite fond of Etzel, and had confided everything to him; all his hopes, and all the legal steps which he had taken; the whole story, and the details of the trial. "You must know him, professor," he interjected, in a coaxing tone; "he said he had once been to see you." Warschauer looked up in surprise. "Yes, he had spent a lot of time and money in finding out your present name and address, and he came straight here. He took the train here one day, meaning to have a talk with you. But I believe he never said a word; he hadn't the courage, the silly old fellow; he simply turned round and rushed away again. Don't you remember?"

Warschauer did seem to have some recollection of the incident.

A rather queer-looking old fellow, he admitted, like a farmer, or some sort of countryman—yes, he remembered: he had come; he had stood at the door, staring like a calf, had asked whether there was a room to let, and had marched off again. It might have been about a year ago. “So that was the . . . h’m! . . . the father of Maurizius. How curious! But”—and he cleared his throat several times—“what did he want? Why did he come?”

“On account of certain letters,” whispered Etzel, in the same coaxing tone, bending farther over the table. Warschauer, noisily drinking the rest of his coffee, held the cup in his hand and asked in astonishment: “Letters? What sort of letters?”

“He says you must have letters that Leonhart wrote you about that time, before the misfortune. And other letters too, which he had written to Fräulein Jahn. He swears that you have them. He would give half his fortune if he could get them. And since he himself did not dare, that time, and since he is too old and ill to come again . . . in short, I couldn’t bear to see him pining away like that; and in any case I didn’t want to stay there any longer; I had always wanted to go to Berlin, so I told him, I’ll try, perhaps he will give me the letters.”

Warschauer shook his head. “I don’t know of any letters,” he protested. “Sheer imagination. You have had your trouble for nothing, young Mohl.” The words sounded sarcastic, yet they had the ring of perfect honesty. Etzel had not anticipated any other reply, but he looked disappointed, and said timidly: “Really not? Do have a good look, professor. To please me. You simply can’t imagine how that old man worships his son. He does not regard him as a criminal, but almost as a saint. He simply worships him. He collects the silliest little trifles, things that belonged to him. He has kept the toys he had as a child. I tell you, he’s crazy. Perhaps you will have a look among your papers.” There was a fleeting glitter from behind the dark glasses. The man’s glance fell, slid across the floor, returned, crept up the boy’s body to his face, and there met another glance, bright and strong, from eyes the colour of bronze. “I haven’t any letters,” he exclaimed, angrily, working his jaw to and fro. “I have nothing

written by . . . by Leonhart Maurizius; no letters to me, none to . . . Fräulein Jahn. That's enough."

Etzel got up, looking a little confused; he pressed his hand to his mouth, a boyish gesture of which he could not break himself. He stood before Warschauer—who, in his long grey frock-coat, a massive and formless figure, sat crouching in his chair—small and slender as a note of exclamation. "Weren't you a friend of his, professor?" he inquired, with innocent curiosity: "I thought you were his friend. . . ." Warschauer knitted his brows contemptuously, and replied evasively, in a drowsy, reluctant tone: "A friend . . . perhaps . . . it's possible . . . there were so many . . . it's possible." Etzel went a step closer. "And tell me, professor," he continued eagerly, as though the question were spontaneous and unpremeditated: "do you really believe that he committed the murder? I mean," he hastily amended, since the monstrosity of having put such a question to the witness for the crown, Waremmé, alarmed him; "I mean, is he guilty, even if . . . even if he did fire the shot?"

Warschauer did not reply, but looked at him with an indescribably dead, cold frozen glance. It seemed as though he had not heard the question, or as though he had forgotten it as soon as it was asked. Etzel could not repress a slight shudder.

2

Presumably, Warschauer-Waremmé had seen through his little tricks and subterfuges far sooner than Etzel had dreamed was possible. So far, indeed, he had but a very faint conception of the man's penetrating intellect and his almost superhuman experience. He had some inkling of it; the accommodating quietness, that seemed to suggest a subterranean fire, and to conceal the threat of a devastating eruption; the undefinable, ravaged melancholy, reminding one of a countryside that had been swept by a cloudburst; the stealthy, unsociable, suspicious temper, like that of a sick, hunted, but still immensely powerful beast of prey; all this he felt, but did not fully realize. So, for a time, he did not perceive that Warschauer had accepted his explanation, that he

had come only on account of the letters, with a scepticism which was, fortunately, combined with too much indifference for him to wish to subject the boy to an inquisition which would at least have been extremely unpleasant. He saw that the pretext bore no relation to the purpose; first, the weeks of beating about the bush, the cunning preparations at Frau Bobike's, the English lessons, the secretarial work, and then this; it was crazy; it was ridiculous. Always, whenever he had wasted a passing thought on the matter, he had dismissed it with a grin, as ridiculous nonsense. As for the boy himself—his bearing, his way of speaking, his good manners, which he could not suppress, despite his occasional attempts at coarseness and slovenliness, the various indications that he came from a comfortable home, the quality of his socks and his linen, the cut of his clothes—no it was too ridiculous, too impertinent, thought Warschauer, without more anger than he would have felt at the scratching of a mouse. A few days later it happened that he drew the boy towards him, squeezed him between his knees, and looked searchingly and intently into his face. Then he took both his hands, one at a time, and looked at them carefully, at the fingers, the nails and the palms. "You have a delicate skin, my boy; you have been cared for, since you were a baby, in accordance with all of the rules of modern hygiene, eh? A fine young gentleman; nothing plebeian here; a fine forehead, slender wrists and ankles, and a quick mind. I like you, Mohl, I'm damned if I don't like you!" Then, chuckling unpleasantly, he released Etzel, who gazed at him with eyes which expressed the utmost confusion. He suddenly seemed to himself the size of his own thumb. Well, you are a pretty devil! he thought to himself, and turned away in discouragement. Warschauer suggested that they should go to a pastry shop and drink chocolate.

He had recognized Etzel's manœuvres to approach him for what they were, but he had, apparently, drawn no deductions of any kind therefrom. Perhaps it had even amused him to see how far the boy would carry them, and whither they would lead him. He knew that people would reveal their motives and purposes of their own accord, if only one gave them time. They just unreeled

themselves, like thread from a spool. He was so secure. He was so inaccessible that he could afford a cynicism which to others looked like modesty and humility. When they were seated in a dark corner of the pastry shop in the Rheinsbergerstrasse, Warschauer said, with that unctuous benevolence which always made Etzel feel as though someone was tweaking his ear with sharp-nailed fingers: "You can ask me anything you like, Mohl. I will gladly give you any information. In that way you learn more useful things than by playing the Indian on the warpath and scenting out my trail. That's no business for you. You should learn something from me." Etzel flushed scarlet to the roots of his hair. "Nothing else interests me, you know," continued Warschauer, licking his lips, to which the chocolate was sticking; "it doesn't interest me and it doesn't affect me. All this beating about the bush, this watching and lying in ambush, is to me like so many flea-bites; I don't even look to see what's biting me; but if I once put my hand out, then, my boy, beware; one squeeze, and the flea is dead."

"I like you, little Mohl." Think of a burning taper on the verge of a desert, in a sultry but breathless night, and you have, if you will accept the fantastic simile, something of the meaning of these words. No less gloomy than this image was the spiritual state of this man, whose relation to the world was in the last stage of disintegration. "It doesn't interest me and it doesn't affect me." That was the key. The elimination of self. One had the impression of a man living between two glass walls, moving about too full of contempt and aversion to lift his eyes and glance about him. He could, if he would, see everything, to the left and the right, behind and before; he had eyes that could see through a brick wall, but it gave him no pleasure to look. He was so disillusioned that he would not lift a finger to improve the apparently depressing conditions under which he was living. Anything that men might say to one another, on any subject whatsoever, was as unimportant as the buzzing of insects; it was only to make one believe in actions which were never to be performed, and to palliate others which would be denied if one confronted the

speakers with their own words. All the great words, the sonorous panaceas, such as religion, fatherland, humanity, ethics, love of one's neighbour, and so forth, he regarded as so many gummed labels in a quack dispensary. Apart from stupidity and avarice, he did not recognize any dynamic qualities which were worth investigation; anything that was attributed to other defects was really only a consequence of that almighty pair. He had no occasion to proclaim his opinions, and if the occasion had presented itself, he would have avoided it like the plague. Why should he tell his thoughts? One might as well suggest that he should turn somersaults on the Potsdamerplatz. Even if he had felt the necessity of expressing himself in conversation, he knew of no one who would listen to him; he was so lonely that, in comparison with him, Convict 357 in the Kressa penitentiary was leading a sociable existence, for he could talk to the warders and associate with his fellow-convicts; but this loneliness of his was of his own deliberate choice. Nevertheless, there was a striking resemblance in the fate of the two men, which might have set a mind of lesser calibre pondering as to the possibility of an occult connection. Warschauer was far from doing that. It was many years since he had felt any desire to look about him, or to trace his path backwards. It was not as though the past had been erased from his memory; how indeed should it be? but he carried it about with him, and it was superfluous to think about it. It was not for him, as for most people, a weather-beaten inscription on a tombstone, but the blood-stream in his arteries, flowing down to the sea of death.

What it was about the boy that he liked he had not seriously considered. It was not merely his youth; that he did not need, did not look for, did not value. He regarded it as a condition of sterile struggles and presumptuous dreams. This was partly because he had stifled the memory of his own youth; he hated himself when he thought of himself as a young man. Yes, he was very young, was young Mohl, but there was something attractive and matter-of-fact about his sixteen or seventeen years; no hysterical intoxication there, none of the vapours of puberty, no slimy

snail-shell romanticism. Was that the new spirit? Were such fellows growing up now? Gay, cool, alert youngsters, who see at once if a nail has fallen from the wall or a pot of jam is missing from the cupboard? Hardly. This well-developed specimen heralded at most a type that was already *démodé*. But there was a charm about the boy, a definite charm, which worked like an exquisite poison, and was as seductive as a rare perfume. Sympathy? No, it had little to do with that. It was rather that one wanted to possess it. But how? To possess: to possess what? Sometimes it seemed comforting to one's skin, like fur against one's naked body. The "ridiculous nonsense" had something to do with it, was comprehended in it. But that was not all. If one analysed it carefully, it evoked a feeling of tenderness and of hatred, of groundless jealousy, of a longing to bridge an abyss at the bottom of which lay a shattered world. Since he had promised the boy that he should learn something from him, he would try to reconstruct this world; not to show him a fabled Atlantis, a drowned fairyland; no, quite the contrary. To him the boy was like a son whom he had failed to beget, who had come to life by some sort of protoplasmic miracle, to give light in a dreadful wilderness. He must somehow gain possession of him; how, could not yet be determined. The longing for knowledge that shone through the boy's whole personality, a longing that strove towards a goal which he, Warschauer, would indeed prefer should not be attained, had perhaps put the means into his hands. He discovered that there was something fascinating about a pair of eyes that really looked at you. What an abstruse idea, that of the unbegotten son! Really, the idea of a devil, or of a madman, in view of the fact that the mere physical nearness of the boy gave him the same hermaphroditic feeling as when he touched a peach that had been lying in the sun.

3

The longing for knowledge. . . . A feeble description. One did not need to be a psychologist to understand that here there was

more than a passing interest, more than an affection for one particular person. Well, one must wait, he decided; for the moment he committed himself to nothing. . . . That evening he had simply sent Etzel away, and the boy had been somewhat intimidated, or had at least appeared to be so. Some days passed before he dared to hint at the subject again. Meanwhile he redoubled his eagerness to be of service; he spent the afternoons and evenings in Warschauer's room; he crept into a corner when other pupils came for their lessons; he began to make a catalogue of the professor's books; he put his linen-drawers in order, sewed loose buttons on his clothes, took instalments of manuscript to the director of the museum, memorized words and rules, and made himself as inconspicuous as possible. Late one afternoon he returned with a bunch of lilies-of-the-valley which he had bought on the way thither, and gave them to the professor with a defiant smile. The latter assumed a strikingly exaggerated and Tartuffian manner. He clapped his hands, and exclaimed in ecstasy, like a singing dervish: "How wonderful, little Mohl, how wonderful! Lilies-of-the-valley, what a glory in my lowly cot! An affectionate thought! There again one sees the superior breeding, the æsthetic temperament! Not under any circumstances whatsoever would the Paalzow boy, for example, think of such a thing! Enchanting! Unfortunately, we have no worthy receptacle, and must therefore rest content with a common tumbler. But the giver ennobles the humble vessel. . . ." He continued thus for a time: Etzel became so nervous that he could have flown at him. Suddenly Warschauer noticed that water was dripping from the boy. He had been out in the rain without an umbrella; his hat and coat were wringing wet, and his trousers were clinging to his legs. Then the farce really began. The professor lamented as though he had a seriously wounded man on his hands. He insisted that Etzel should take off his shoes and socks, hung his overcoat and jacket up to dry, got a woollen blanket from the alcove, wrapped him up in it, and bade him lie down on the sofa—which Etzel did only after a good deal of angry protest—and at once proceeded to make tea, in order to warm

him. His dismay, his assiduity, his lamentations and exclamations, and the way in which he rubbed his hands, and hissed and clucked with distress, was so obviously a comedy that Etzel could finally bear it no longer, and shouted angrily: "Do stop that! You are only doing it to make fun of me. Because you don't want to talk to me about real things. But I have had enough of this. I am going home." He threw his legs off the sofa and sat up. Warschauer was reaching for the tea-caddy on the what-not. He turned round slowly. "About what real things, my dear young friend?" he inquired, in honeyed tones, and with feigned surprise. "Well, I have already asked you once," exclaimed Etzel, irritably, "and you would not tell me anything."—"What? What's all this about?" demanded Warschauer, still pretending that he did not know to what Etzel was alluding.—"I asked you whether you believe that he was guilty . . . Maurizius?"

Warschauer behaved as though he were greatly surprised. With the tea-caddy in one hand and the lid in the other, he walked stiffly across to the sofa. "Since you are so well informed about the facts, little Mohl, you must know that I swore to it at the time." The voice no longer sounded oily, but dry. "Yes, yes, I know that," replied Etzel, devouring the black glasses with his eyes. "But one can be mistaken. Is there no, no, no possibility that you were mistaken?"

"The devil!" murmured Warschauer. It was the threefold repetition that evoked the exclamation. "Such a mistake would still have to be based on an actual incident, young Mohl," he said, and placed the tea-caddy almost noiselessly on the table. "Certainly," admitted Etzel: "he may, for example, have fired the shot and have missed." Warschauer grinned. "So, so. Have fired and missed. . . . Extraordinary. A theory worth considering." Etzel's eyes gleamed angrily. "I'll tell you something. You cannot impress me with your sarcasm. It is as though someone wouldn't fight honestly, but preferred to get into safety and put out his tongue. You ought to be ashamed."

"I understand," said Warschauer quietly, in English. He stared attentively for a while at the excited boy. "I'll talk to you

frankly, Mohl," he said at last. "Even if I had made a mistake, it *ought not* to have been a mistake."

"What does that mean? Please explain!"

Warschauer walked round the room twice, with his hands behind his back and his coat-tails swinging. "In order to explain that, Mohl . . . it was, as a matter of fact, a rhetorical figure. There was no possibility of a mistake." He was standing near the sofa again. "How do you feel? Hot? If only you don't get feverish. . . ."

"In order to explain that. . . ." Etzel repeated his first words, like a child who is defrauded of a promised story. "What an impatient fellow you are! Calm your unruly impulses, my little friend!" said Warschauer, sarcastically, in a booming voice; and he resumed his walk, with hollowed back and with his coat-tails swinging, so that his gait looked like the strut of a rooster.

"First, you were going to speak frankly; then it is just a rhetorical figure," said Etzel, angrily: "what can one make of that?"

Warschauer sighed. "My dear good Mohl, the whole business is so far away, the whole tragic farce . . . so far away . . . it has sunk under the horizon . . . mere shadows, mere phantoms . . . it is best shrouded in silence." He walked round the table, took up the tea-caddy, placed the lid on it, and struck it with his flat hand; a categorical full stop.

Etzel was in despair; the miserable old fellow; just now he had made such a good beginning; what can I do, how shall I set to work? Outwardly, he was silent; he saw that he dared not go any farther that day. But everything in him revolted against this lame dawdling, step by step, as though one's feet were bogged in a swamp, while the other, standing at the edge of the swamp, kept on moving farther away, pretending all the while that he was going to help one. He saw, too, that he would not get anywhere with the tactics which he had been employing, and that he must change them. Compared with this fellow Trismegistos is like a comfortable warm stove, he thought bitterly; and suddenly his father appeared before him, sitting half-turned away, one knee crossed over the other; an immovable, monumental figure. It was

a shy memory which assumed a pictorial form, and at once dissolved again. He had no time, no room in his mind for any but the one consideration: what am I to do, how shall I set about it? While he was racking his brains over the matter, instinct had already shown him the right way; instinct and interest. For as the personality of Warschauer became more and more enigmatic and incomprehensible, so the man's presence became more and more disquieting; he could not refrain from observing him, studying him, and listening to all he said; and he felt a burning desire to force his way into this unknown life, to the point where George Warschauer left off and Gregor Waremmé began. For of Waremmé he knew practically nothing. Waremmé stood behind a cloud. Waremmé was the master, who hid himself; Warschauer the insignificant assistant who took his orders. The two figures were sharply distinguished from one another; far more sharply, for instance, than E. Andergast and E. Mohl. Of these two, Mohl was the more important, although the more recent; E. Andergast could never have met Warschauer; that had been E. Mohl's task, and now it was Mohl's task to bring Waremmé to bay. Poor Mohl, thought Etzel ironically: you alone, against the two of them, Warschauer and Waremmé! With such playful thoughts he would often dispel his attacks of discouragement. As for Warschauer, he accepted this half-concealed, half-naïvely impatient interest of Etzel's amiably enough, and was only waiting for the real assault before satisfying it. As I have already hinted, he was perfectly willing to comply with such a demand, in so far as it concerned himself. Two days after the last conversation it happened that Etzel pulled out from a pile of old and dusty pamphlets one on which was written, in a bold and unmistakably youthful hand, the name *George Warschauer*. And also the month and year: *April, 1896*. Warschauer, chancing to look at him, noticed his surprised expression, went over to him, glanced at the name, and said: "That's right, that's my name; my real name. That was the name I grew up with." Etzel's eyes stared. That's comical, he thought, feeling as though he had been cheated; so it's only my imagina-

tion that Warschauer is a survival of Waremmé; before Waremmé there was already a Warschauer; Waremmé is merely an episode . . . and he whispered the name gently to himself. "George Warschauer, the son of Jewish parents, of Thorn; there you have the truth, friend Mohl. And about that I could tell you a good deal."

For the time being, however, he did not seem anxious to begin; perhaps the confinement of his room oppressed him; perhaps it was too early in the afternoon; yet it seemed to Etzel as though he were on the point of speaking, as though he were waiting for some internal release. "Let's go for a bit of a stroll, little Mohl," he said: "the weather is fine; let us go and see a little life."

"I should like to," replied Etzel, "but the stroll won't last long; we are sure to end up in a pastry shop."—"Yes. I know one that's not so dull as the one in the Rheinsbergerstrasse; it's not far, either; near the Zehdenicker Casino. There's music there at five. To-day is Saturday, isn't it? There will be a jazz band to-day." Etzel consented, although he was in no mood for jazz; but, since he was aware of Warschauer's liking for it, and did not want to put him out of humour, he accompanied him. They sat for an hour and a half in that deplorable din, at one of the crowded tables, amidst women of the lower-middle class, suburban prostitutes, petty officials, shop-assistants, and professional dancers: tawdrily smart, heavily painted, and painfully emaciated. Warschauer was delighted; the whirling, gliding, thrusting, twining movements of the dancers, the heated faces in the scented dusk, and above all the blaring, squeaking and howling of the instruments filled him with absolute ecstasy. Once he seized Etzel's hand and whispered: "Boy, such a saxophone is priceless! It's worth a three-volume history of civilization. See the man at the kettle-drum! Doesn't he look a veritable Torquemada? Cruel, sinister, fanatical? A magnificent specimen; he certainly pulled the legs off cockchafers and roasted cats' tails when he was a youngster."—"Very possible, but what is there in that to delight you so?" asked Etzel coldly. Warschauer patted his hand. "Biological interest; purely a matter of research," he

assured him, with lifted eyebrows. "Do you know that young lady over there?" he interrupted himself, wagging his chin in the direction of a thin, plain girl who had risen from an adjoining table and was staring pertly at Etzel. It was Melitta Schneevogt. She lifted a finger threateningly, as though to say: Now I've caught you, you hypocrite! Etzel gave her a friendly nod. He noticed that her hair was bobbed; when he had seen her last it had still been long. There is something going on there; one ought to keep an eye on her, he thought; but he promptly forgot all about her.

It was already growing dark when they left; a fire-alarm sounded near the Senefelderplatz; presently, through the cañon of the street, they saw the red-brown flames leaping upwards. People began to run; a few mounted policemen galloped by. A furniture factory was on fire. They walked for a while through the neighbouring streets, hearing through the signals of the fire-brigade the crackling and roaring of the flames; then the tumult became too dangerous; but near Schröderstrasse they came to a park which was almost empty. They sat down on a bench; the crimson glow of the fire shone through the tops of the lime-trees; a dog slunk noiselessly by, turned round, stopped in front of them, sniffed expectantly, and disappeared again. And Warschauer said: "Well, about my name; I'll explain how it was. . . ."

4

"Oh, yes, your name," exclaimed Etzel, as though he had never given it another thought. He moved closer to Warschauer, in order to hear better, and—since it was growing dark—to see better. "The name, of course, is the least important part of the story," continued Warschauer: "it's merely a key; though of course to particular doors. Have you associated at all with Jews, Mohl?"

"Oh, rather! There are bags of Jews at home."

"Had you any Jewish school fellows?"

"Yes."

"Did you get on well with them?"

"Quite well."

"So you don't object to them on principle?"

Etzel shook his head. He was familiar with the idea that one might be hostile to Jews on principle, but he did not share the prejudice.

"No instructions from your parents, no prohibitions, nothing of that sort?"

"No . . . no."

"You seem to hesitate. There *was* something?"

"Sometimes, but I didn't worry about that. If they were nice chaps I didn't let that bother me."

"Good. That's what I wanted to know."

He was silent for a few moments, stabbing the sand with his stick. "Can you conceive that a man should try to deceive himself about his own birth? A complicated business. To be unwilling to be what one is, to deny the roots from which one has sprung—it means wearing one's own skin like a borrowed coat. I was the child of Jewish parents who were living in the second generation of bourgeois freedom. My father had not yet arrived at the consciousness that the condition of apparent equality was actually one of toleration only. People like my father, who was in other respects a splendid man, were religiously and socially speaking floating in the air. They no longer had the old faith; they refused to accept a new one, that is to say, Christianity, partly for good reasons, partly for bad. The Jew wants to be a Jew. What is a Jew? No one can explain that to his complete satisfaction. My father was proud of being emancipated. Emancipation is a cunning device; it deprives the oppressed of the pretext for complaint. Society excludes him; the State excludes him; the physical ghetto has become a mental and moral one; the Jew sticks out his chest and calls it emancipation. Have you ever thought about this, young Mohl, or have you by chance ever met a person who had occasion to think about certain . . . well, let us call them discords? No? You have had more important things to do, I understand; but perhaps, nevertheless, what is going on here in this country has

come to your ears. I am not referring to the fact that they would much rather take back their pitiful gift of a beggarly franchise; that would at least be honest; it would perhaps be more praiseworthy than destroying . . . yes, let me give you an example—than demolishing tombstones in cemeteries; don't you think so? What do you think of that, my dearest Mohl: demolishing tombstones . . . desecrating graveyards . . . that is new in the history of civilization, eh, what? *Dernier cri*. Compared with that, in my opinion all the poisoning of wells and the ritual murders, though bloody and brainless, were, if one thinks broadly, things that one could excuse on the grounds of delusion and passion; what do you think? You are silent, little Mohl. I respect your silence. You see, this affair of tombstones is a symbol, a peculiar and infernal symbol. Have you ever observed how the last sparks of a piece of burnt paper scatter before it turns black? So it is here. The last sparks of decency, self-respect, dignity, humanity, or whatever other humbugging word they use, become scattered, and everything turns black. But I am digressing. However, I once coined the phrase: *to digress is to exhaust a theme*. Nor do I wish to dwell on my family reminiscences any longer. Just be patient; I am moving on—that is, to myself. But first, my dear Mohl, one more axiom, and one of general application: In every life there is a moment when a person can make a decision according to the polar antitheses of his nature. Accordingly, Shakespeare might equally well have become a highwayman, like Robin Hood, instead of a dramatist; Lenin, the chief of police under the Tsarist régime, instead of the destroyer of that régime. Possibly I myself, had I received a certain impetus—which for inscrutable reasons I did not receive—might have become a Jewish leader, a Luther among the Jews. Instead of which I. . . well, that's just what I am talking about. Our external behaviour is dependent on a profound dualism, which is as innate in us as the instinct or knowledge of right and left. Don't ever let anyone tell you, Mohl, that a person might not, under certain circumstances, have behaved differently from the way in which he did behave. It is not true. The question is only how far one must go back to find the point where his

freedom of will was still intact. After all, I can offer you a personal experience of a sort . . . am I not boring you? Really not? Good. The thing which made me suffer like a dog when I was a child was the cowardice of my race. That they were satisfied with their slave-like existence, that they consoled themselves with a mythological, artificially cultivated feeling that they were a chosen race: yes, that made me suffer. Or else they played the gentleman in the pens which were graciously allotted to them; or rather, they aped the masterfulness of their masters. I hated them all. I hated their idiom, their humour, their mode of thought, their business spirit, their specific melancholy, their presumption, their self-ridicule. I would bite my pillow with rage at night when I thought of any slander or rebuff which I, or my father, or indeed any Jew had suffered. I trembled with rage and shame in school when the word Jew was merely pronounced, even in an ordinary statement; can you understand that? It all depended on the way in which it was pronounced; on the prejudice, the falsification of history, the innate hatred, which had not lost any of its coarseness or venom in the course of the centuries. I knew all about that. (Warschauer struck the ground with his cane.) When I was nine years old I knew all about that; at fifteen I had thoroughly studied the subject, and was ready for any discussion. But discussions do not alter facts, not even the most infamous, not in our world, to-day; and of all facts, there was one that was utterly unbearable to me, and that was this: that I should be excluded from any sphere of life or activity. What, I? I, with my gifts, with my intelligence, with the fire that I had within me; could I not under any circumstances become—let us say, for example, a cabinet minister? No, under no circumstances, nor even the president of a scientific academy. And that was aiming high, my dear”—and here he laughed—“these were indeed fantastic pretensions; my ambition did not dare to soar so high as a professorship. Under no circumstances could I obtain the recognition which a man of the most mediocre mentality might demand as a matter of course, so long as he did not bear the brand of the *Vehmgericht*, the secret tribunal. The thought drove me mad. I

might study. I might teach after my own fashion. I might create, and no one would place any special obstacle in my way; in the end they would not deny me recognition, and if I accomplished something very remarkable they might come to the point of admiring me; but . . . in their innermost souls, they would not believe in me; in their hearts, they would deny my achievements, and only under the most extreme pressure would they bestow on me the honours which they lavished on their own kind." He took off his soft felt hat, but replaced it at once. "Yet all that was only the mental aspect. It's impossible to give you a true idea of the essential thing, the feeling: 'it is forbidden, it is denied me. . . .' Denied? What was I denied? I was simply denied the right to exist, to co-operate. I could exist—in those days, at any rate—I could exist only if I had the world before me, the whole fullness of the world, without any deductions or limitations; the whole expanse of intellectual life. So the objection which you have probably been making, silently, to yourself, that any single one of all of these reasons should have sufficed to make me proclaim my solidarity with my race, drawing a redoubled strength from opposition . . . this objection collapses. As I have said, I did not love my race. Since I did not love it, I refused to belong to it. The Jews could not offer me any substitute for what I was denied. I was not a renegade in leaving them; I was obeying a necessity of my being. To say that I did not love them was only half the truth. The whole truth is that I loved the others, those who were on the other side. This is not infrequently the case; the man who is repudiated squanders his soul on those who repudiate him. A very Jewish situation. That from which he is excluded is the promised land; that which he doesn't possess is his dearest possession. Paradise lost over again. It is once more a Jewish affair. The fall from grace. There I hated, here I loved. I loved their language . . . their language? My language, just as my eyes are my own. . . . I loved their faces, their heroes, their country-side, their cities. I have loved all this more profoundly than they love it themselves; I understand it all better than they. That is not boasting, my son; that is—fate. For that matter . . . I have given

proof. Now, to go back. The thing began with the fabrication of legends. When my mother died, a simple woman, who still held to the old Jewish customs, I pretended that she had been a Christian, the daughter of a retired officer; I persuaded myself of this so thoroughly that to me it became a fact, tricked out with the most convincing details, such as you find in a Russian novel. But this produced only a mongrel, and I wanted to be a thoroughbred; so by inventing a secret affair with a Silesian landowner, I arbitrarily eliminated the part which my Jewish father (who had also died in the meantime) had played in begetting me. That was all that was needed. Nature had favoured me; I was blond, a genuine Germanic blond (he laughed again, unpleasantly); the shape of my face, you cannot deny it, is not Oriental; even as a boy I resembled our peasant type at home. Apart from that, the will forms the countenance. By the time I was in the first form at the gymnasium I was already using the name of Waremmme. I obtained it by adoption. My adopted father was a Catholic; an author, a writer of tracts, an agent in all sorts of obscure transactions, and an anti-Semitic agitator; he was simply crazy about me; he regarded me as a genius. Perhaps he was not so far wrong. Perhaps not, at that time. At all events, I knew how to make people believe in me. Not by any tricks: don't think that; I simply held the world in my hand and moulded it like a piece of wax. I never courted people. But up to a certain stage in my life I had absolute power over all who entered my circle; I learned to dominate people; a pleasure that has no equal, an art which insists being practised. The change of name which I mentioned was made with the assistance of a canon and an experienced lawyer. Baptism and entering the Church were of course involved. Then all was plain sailing ahead of me. Did you say anything, Mohl? I thought you said something. Plain sailing; and so it was. Invisible hands prepared the way for me. The years at the universities—Breslau, Jena, Freiburg—always going from east to west—were simply a series of triumphs. Yes, from east to west, always farther, from the depths to the heights, then again into the depths, into the very depths: from east to west, like the sun. But I am digressing

again. I lived a carefree life. My father had left me practically nothing; but plentiful means came into my hands; the best introductions opened all doors to me; I became a member of exclusive societies; I talked to dreaded dignitaries, as to my cousins. And I did not idle away my time, young Mohl; not by any means, for a rabid industry is the heritage of my race; I did not know what to do with all the energies that were in me; energies that came to me from hidden sources, from the unused stock of generations. I no longer hated my life; no; the philosopher Waremmé lent wings to the poet Waremmé, the poet to the discoverer of spiritual treasures, the intermediary between human beings, the leader, and the leader lent wings to the politician; and then the real goal appeared; creative politics. I was conscious of a vocation for that; the idea of a transformed Europe, a continental unity under a German, a German-Roman hegemony, filled me with enthusiasm. Oh, what dreams! What wild dreams! Naturally, I did not wish to tie myself down to any office; I refused the most tempting offers; it was all too little for me; I was afraid that my star might set if I were to use it as a lamp; but then, in the midst of my flight, came the fall. In the midst of my soaring the most hideous fall. But the catastrophe had a peculiar logic about it, a mysterious logic; I tried not to see it, I believed I could brazen it out . . . but, oh, hell, Mohl, you let me sit here gossiping, staring at me as a hungry man stares at a loaf. I believe it's infernally late; come, come, let's go."

5

It was not very late; only ten o'clock. They walked back in silence. On Usedomstrasse Warschauer wanted to bid the boy good-bye, but Etzel asked if he might come up to his rooms. He was not tired; he was so little tired that he was afraid of bed. Warschauer laughed, deep in his chest rather than with his lips. "You have lost the rubber, my dear Mohl," he growled. "No more stories for to-day. Warschauer & Company are closing the office." He slipped the key into the lock of the front door. Etzel had the feeling: you mustn't let go now, or it's all up; what has thawed

will be frozen again to-morrow. He thought with terror of his lessening funds; in spite of the most careful thrift they were growing less from day to day; what would happen when they were exhausted? He could not seek refuge with Warschauer, who had nothing himself; besides, that would mean surrendering to him unconditionally. Time was passing; the old man in Hanau showed as ravaged a face as though death already had him in its grasp; for the man in the penitentiary, week after week was passing; Trismegistos was sitting with his legs crossed, half averted, caring nothing for justice; somewhere in the unknown his mother was looking for him; Etzel could not stand it any longer; he could not stand it; it was only with a great effort that he was able to collect himself and conceal his feelings, and everything depended on that; he must keep cool, he must keep his head. He realized now whither this Warschauer-Waremme was dragging him, into what an underworld he was being drawn, into the immeasurable darkness of this mighty soul; he had thought it would all be different, and simpler; difficult, of course, but difficult as a problem in arithmetic is difficult; a tangle to be unravelled with patience and cunning, not difficult in such a way that a life with its whole burden of problems would lie upon his chest, a mysterious, alien, sinister character in which all was yet to be deciphered. He had not expected that he would have to begin every day afresh, with a minimum of information and a maximum of self-effacement, for it seemed to him that nothing was reliable in Waremme; there was nothing in him that he could love, nothing that could reconcile him to the man; he would have liked to see him lie bound before him, to be able to compel him, with a red-hot iron in his hand, to confess: yes or no; nothing more, simply yes or no! Oh, to pry out everything, bit by bit, to piece everything together, bit by bit, and not to know whether one would get that yes or no! He shivered; he was cold; he was feverish; he was hot and cold by turns every five minutes; but he told himself: if you give in to yourself, you are a rotter or a blockhead; so hold on!

He went upstairs with Warschauer; the latter had consented to give him half an hour. He had not reckoned with the staying

powers and tenacity of his "famulus"; above all, he had failed to reckon with his own desire to pour out his story; a desire which, once aroused, fed upon itself, and now compelled him automatically to continue. It will suffice to say that it was three o'clock in the morning when Etzel left the house. When he entered the street, the sky was already paling over the Exerzierplatz. He was at first unable to set one foot before the other; he lay down at full length on the stone steps in front of a gin-shop which had just been closed, pressed his hands against his chest, shut his eyes, and drew as deep a breath as he could. He was trembling continuously. But I am running ahead of my story.

There was an uproar in the narrow corridor above as they climbed the stairs. Hideous, quarrelsome voices came from the Paalzow's flat. The Paalzow boy was attacking his mother in respect of some money, and a baby was crying pitifully. In Warschauer's room the air was like rancid fat; the professor could not at once find the matches, and swore softly; at last the gas was lit, and they saw an army of big black cockroaches which had crept out from under the door of the alcove, and were crawling disgustingly about the shelf on which the food was kept. "That's jolly," said Etzel. He stood awhile lost in thought; then he drenched a handkerchief with methylated spirit, and threw it over the vermin where they were thickest; and when some hundreds of them lay there stupefied he seized a broom and calmly swept them out of the door. "Coffee?" he asked, and Warschauer nodded. The coffee-boiler was set going for the *n*th time that day. Warschauer walked up and down with his drum-major's gait, his hands under his coat-tails and his brow unusually gloomy. A gramophone in the third storey ground out a popular street-song, and Etzel hummed the words: *Fräulein Len, schlafen gehn*. . . . "Be so good as to stop that hideous and obscene song, Mohl!" said Warschauer, in his ecclesiastical manner, looking angrily at the boy. "All right," replied Etzel, "I'll sing it through next time. But one good turn is worth another, they say; so just tell me, professor . . . no, I won't be quiet; I don't care how furious you look, now you must . . . or you shouldn't have begun. He who says

A must say B, whatever you may think. Now you have served the sauce isn't there to be any joint? Listen to me: I have staked something on this: it is a question of . . . for heaven's sake, believe me or not, but don't keep me wriggling like this; that's simply sickening of you, sickening, do you hear?" He stood before Warschauer with clenched fists and flashing eyes, as though he had a mind to knock him down. "Tut, tut, tut, what a muddle this nobody of a Leonhart Maurizius has made of your otherwise cheerful little mind! Well, what do you want to know? What am I to tell you? Only not too much at a time, my boy. If you tap me, I am capable of giving you something that will take your breath away. I have had a good time with you, my boy; you will have a bad time with me. Good little boy, unsuspecting youngster, splashing about so courageously in tepid waters, tickling the fin of the shark! Come here, come here, Mohl, come here to me this instant: I want to stroke your skin a little . . . come right over here. . . ." Again the idol, the voice of the idol, drunken with sleep and lecherous.

"No," whispered Etzel, taking refuge behind a pile of books.

"Coward!" mocked Warschauer. "Don't you realize that you have a man of differentiated natural tendencies before you? A grain coarser and . . . I warn you. The relaxation of standards is something outside your knowledge. Thank God. If that were not the case you would already be a rotten fruit. I warn you against the exalted æsthetes, the pious Greeks, the priests of the new rhythm, the esoterics and illuminati who worship the herma-phroditic god in their Black Masses. These people will hunt you incessantly; the cult has won an army of adherents for the simple reason that they wish to couple Mars with Eros, in order to strengthen him, after his cruel defeat, by this secret alliance. Suppressed instincts are running rampant. You don't understand me? All the better. From me, at any rate, you have nothing to fear. The bridge between us in this respect has no more solidity than a rainbow. Still puzzled and suspicious? Ah, it's dawning on him! Thank heaven!" He went quickly up to Etzel, took his head between his hands, gazed at him searchingly, and kissed

him on the forehead. Etzel did not move. Here was the cannibalistic side of the man, tempered to a sort of intellectual sublimity. Nevertheless, a cold shiver ran down Etzel's spine. "Well?" he murmured, obstinately. Warschauer grinned. "I call that exploiting the situation," he said, mockingly: "you have nothing in your head but the one thing. . . ."—"Well?" insisted Etzel, childishly fierce. "Yes," said Warschauer, calmly, "we were obliged to destroy one another, I him, and he me."

He walked up and down, considering, his left hand on the back of his neck, swinging his right arm in time with his steps like a soldier. The tumbler on the table jingled with his reverberating tread. He really looks awfully comical, so fat and sinister, thought Etzel, listening intently, all his senses on the alert. At first he threw out only casual remarks. Some of them sounded like mere rhetoric; as, for example, that in Maurizius he had met a nature antipodal to his own. But as he became more precise a dazzling light was cast on their mutual relations. There had actually been a collision, but the momentum was greatest on the side of the intrusive body; the other had been simply shaken out of its passivity. He had therefore had no choice; he had been obliged to partake of the movement. "There was nothing for me to do: I had to get in front of him, on top of him; I had to make him harmless." "But why?" said Etzel in astonishment, "since you have just said that he was a cipher." Without interrupting his walk, Warschauer stretched his right arm into the air. "That, of course, but a representative cipher. A cipher situated where it helped to construct a tremendous number. All public life is made of such ciphers. In any case, he was a cipher with a following worth considering; and, moreover, a gifted cipher, a brilliant cipher, which one could be certain would some day go up in the air like a balloon. But that was not the decisive point. What clinched the matter was . . . just note this. Here stood Waremmé, Gregor Waremmé, a new man. I had conquered the world, one redoubt after another. I had settled myself in a satisfactory position; I had attuned my feelings accordingly; and in getting hold of the people I needed I had achieved a task—and please note this—

merely in giving them faith in me, in making them believe in me, I had achieved a task whose consequences I was to feel for half a score of years in every nerve of my body. I have been told of Salvini—a dramatic genius of whom you have possibly heard—that after every big performance he had a collapse. One of my friends, a theatrical manager, told me that once, after the fifth act of Othello, Salvini collapsed unconscious, behind the scenes, and a doctor had had to work over him for an hour and a half before he could call him back to life. There are—I am speaking from experience—actors of that sort and—others. Some die a heartrending death on the stage, and when the curtain falls they burst into obscene jokes. Now you are looking at me again with such naïve surprise, little Mohl; the parable of the actor obviously makes you suspicious. But I was an actor; I had to act, and if I did not act with the most perfect art, with the most complete devotion, I might as well pack up and get out. *Actor*: don't object to the word! Don't take it in a plebeian sense; don't forget that it is a hundred years since Goethe wrote *Wilhelm Meister*, and the poem about Mieding's death, and more than a hundred and fifty years since Lichtenberg's letters concerning Garrick. Since then the actor has sunk to be an employee in an industrial concern, a chocolate-box hero of the lower-middle class. That, however, is beside the mark. I remember that I once discussed the subject a whole night through with Maurizius. He did not understand me. He was stupid enough on that point to drive one mad. Moreover, I was an actor; of course I was. And he was not; my God, he was not! That I was one ruined me; that he was not ruined him. . . ."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Etzel, breathless with curiosity. "Explain to me, first of all, why you were an actor?" Unintentionally he took a few steps behind the strutting Warschauer, so that the pair looked like a ridiculous caricature of the long and short of it. "Every unusual effort of the character, or the mind, is based on a sublimation of the art of metamorphosis," said Warschauer, didactically. "Just bear in mind what branches of knowledge I had to master: the most heterogeneous subjects, philosophy, theology, economics, history, languages, government

—all from the inside, from the point of view of their fundamental ideal. Remember that from the beginning I had decided not to use any of them as a milch-cow, nor as the means to a title or position, for the well-considered reason which I have already suggested to you—that I wanted to rise higher. Consequently, I had not only to steer such a course as would bring myself constantly forward in the most advantageous way, but also I had to instruct and inspire and organize my admirers, supporters, ambassadors and proselytizers, precisely estimating their talents and abilities, so that I was constantly involved in a complicated network of interests, like the general of a religious order; for according to my ideas of that time something tremendous was at stake; a powerful party was counting upon me; the Kaiser's attention had been drawn to me; the Vatican was sending its secret emissaries to me; and remember that, last but not least, I had to be careful to eradicate my former traces; I had constantly, so to speak, to contend against some last, obscure, metaphysical remnant of a bad conscience, which cast a shadow, even in my own mind, upon my purely humanitarian disinterestedness, making it appear the result of effort, if not of torment. Just add all this together, and then deny, if you can, that it was anything less than dancing on the point of a needle. He, he, on the other hand . . . not an inkling! Living in a cosy nest. Hadn't the least idea. He had simply sprung up spontaneously. The lily of the field. No effort whatsoever. Leonhart the effortless. Did he have to play a part? Was there a part for him to play? What did he know of the play in which he appeared, since he did not 'appear' at all, but simply 'let himself go'? Let himself go; Leonhart the effortless! Let himself go! Had his place at the table d'hôte, his ticket always waiting in the box-office. Learning? A department store where one provides oneself with one's materials. With expensive articles, of course, so that you can hardly detect that they are articles of mass production. The people who know are scarce, and one must have hard luck not to be able to fool them. Art? A noble occupation. Labour? We all know that labour is ennobling. It is only for pleasure that the gods demand the

sweat of one's brow. And for love, they demand the sacrifice of a heart . . . which has nothing to give. A cipher within a cipher." He laughed, a bitter and curiously menacing laugh.

"All the same, I can't understand," Etzel ventured to object, leaning, deep in thought, against the sliding door. "Just because that is your opinion of him, I cannot get it into my head that there should have been any opposition between you. How was it possible? Leonhart the effortless—yes. But why just he? It might just as well have been, so it seems to me, any one of a hundred others. There must have been . . . now I'll tell you something, professor, only you mustn't fly out at me. . . ."—"Well?"—"I think there must have been . . . may I say it?"—"Don't be afraid, little Mohl, what must there have been . . . ?"—"It must have been Fräulein Jahn's fault. *Fault*—that sounds so stupid. . . . I mean she must have been the occasion. . . ."

Warschauer smiled his incomprehensible smile. "Oh, is that so?" he said, in a travesty of the American accent. "I wonder. Clever boy. Never in my life did I see such a clever boy!"

And Warschauer resumed his strutting up and down the room.

CHAPTER XI

I

THERE was a long silence. Warschauer seemed to be taking counsel with himself. Presumably he was surprised by the boy's audacity. What was he to look for behind it? His experienced glance could not fail to perceive the peculiar innocence with which the boy had now, for the second time, pronounced that name. He was fundamentally unsuspicious, in spite of all his assumed knowledge of facts, and his curious dryness. He had spoken of the woman as one might refer to an interesting character in a play, with whom one was, it might be presumed, familiar. Or he was like a detective who first diverts the attention of his victim by all sorts of digressions, only, with cool deliberation, to hurl the most damning evidence in his face. Crazy and ridiculous! As though he, Warschauer, had anything to fear! He had nothing whatever to fear. That he had settled down in Berlin, to lead an existence of almost shadowy secrecy, was his own free decision; he was not being pursued; he had no reason to fear any investigation; there was nothing against him. He had obtained the right to resume his original name "over there". What had determined him to do this was very closely connected with the catastrophe which he called his "European failure"; but that had only been the preliminary to a far greater "failure". He explained, eagerly, that he could divide his previous life, from this point of view, into four clearly defined periods: the Jewish, the Christian-German, the overseas-international, and the present one, for which he had not yet found a suitable title. Perhaps his amiable friend Mohl would think of one. Something like "the reversion". The regenerative reversion. It was extremely remarkable. He might recommend himself to various modern writers as the model for a Proteus. He could even give them information as to the present constitution of the world with which they could make their fortune. He himself had given up in that connection. It did not pay. He could not even make up his mind to write one of the usual autobiographies. Twenty-five thousand printed publications

appeared in Germany every year; it was too damnably silly to add Number Twenty-five Thousand and One. Moreover, he would be boycotted; he would be regarded as a crazy man who wanted to outdo the terrors of the Apocalypse.

He rambled on for a while in this tone, while Etzel stood impatiently first on one foot, then on the other; then he took the clothes-brush from its nail and began to brush his coat with assiduous care. As he did so, he cast malicious, sidelong glances at the boy over the rims of his dark glasses: then he suddenly changed the subject, and began to tease Etzel about his reference to Anna Jahn. "That was simply a shot in the back; fortunately from an unloaded revolver, my boy," he said, sarcastically. "It was tactless, indiscreet. It isn't decent to blurt out things in that way."

"Well, I simply thought that in that case, since you had the advantage," said Etzel, not in the least intimidated, "in that case, you were victorious all the way along the line." Warschauer, stooping a little, made a face like a steer chewing the cud, wary and intractable.

"From what do you deduce that?" he asked.—"From various things."—"For example?"—"Well, for example, from Fräulein Jahn's having still been friends with you—or living with you—two years afterwards." Warschauer's brows contracted as though he were calculating. "Two years? No, you are mistaken. It wasn't even one. Wait . . . from the beginning of 1907 until November." The correction was made in a tone of such amiability that it warned Etzel to be on his guard. But Etzel paid no further attention to danger; he allowed himself to be borne along from one piece of audacity to another, as though intoxicated. Nothing matters any more now, he thought, as he answered boldly: "Yes, but I know that she did not return from where she was with you until much later, and there was nothing left of all the money which she had inherited from her sister. She was as poor as a beggar. I happen to know that quite accurately," he lied brazenly, "for I happen to know the lady who took her in, in her terrible plight. So I am nevertheless right when I maintain that in this

case you very completely got the better of Leonhart Maurizius. He got nothing, and you made off with the loot."

The effect of this attack upon Warschauer was very singular. At first he looked as though he wanted to fly at Etzel; the earthy colour of his face turned to a bluish-green, and a red patch appeared in the middle of his forehead; and the most singular thing was that the tips of his ears began to quiver (for his ears were not rounded at the top, but pointed, like those of a faun). For the second time since Etzel had known him, he removed his glasses, and for the second time Etzel saw the pale, watery, lightless eyes. A deep sigh lifted his breast, and Etzel wondered, tensely, what the old man would do now. For him Warschauer, with his forty-seven or forty-eight years, was an old man, but he had never before produced the impression of "being old" so strongly as in those fearful ten or twelve seconds. His mouth opened and clapped to again; his watery eyes travelled about almost as though seeking a weapon with which to strike; then, quite suddenly, his features relaxed, he took a few steps towards Etzel, stood still, shook his head as though disconcerted, dropped into his writing-chair, and sank into profound meditation. And so some ten minutes passed.

"Come here, Mohl," he suddenly said, quietly. Etzel obeyed in silence. Warschauer put on his glasses again and took the boy's two hands, which he held tightly. "When I was still a student," he began with a lugubrious smile, "I had to prepare a young Count Rochow for an examination. One day I told him to tell me all that he knew about the Greek Helen. He said—I remember almost every word, because it was such an unparalleled hodge-podge of all the versions which he had read—that Helen, the daughter of Nemesis and Zeus, first had a love affair with a swan, then married Menelaus, was seduced by Paris, and after the fall of Troy went with him to Egypt, where it turned out that she was the wrong Helen. The true Helen had remained with Achilles, and was attacked by Orestes and Pylades, but was rescued by Apollo. All *ad-hoc* knowledge is like this, my young friend; the result is a Helen—the Lord have mercy on us!—at

once the daughter of Nemesis and of Leda. Human history, my child, if one wishes to rely upon it, is like angling for fish in a burning crater. Anyone who gets seriously interested will at best merely learn something about fire and lava. He will not catch fish. And first of all, just learn one thing; it is always all different. It is mysterious even to the person who has the experience; how then could anyone who merely knows about it presume to say that it was thus and thus? But I don't want to take you to task too seriously, youngster. I am sorry for you." He let Etzel's hands fall and got up without noticing the boy's somewhat disconcerted expression.

2

He went to the window, opened it, and murmured: "The sky over there is still red," closed the window again, and continued: "What do you really think about it when you speak of Anna Jahn, little Mohl? Are you not at all fearful of the depths of your own ignorance? It has the effect on me of a baby chattering about the nebula in Andromeda. You must excuse me, but there are dimensions and relations involved here about which you cannot have any opinion. I do not believe, either, that I can be of any use to you in this respect. I would be so gladly; why should one not give a gifted boy a few hints as to psychological labyrinths which may at some time be useful to him? But with all your maturity, Mohl . . . it is astonishing what problems you treat without embarrassment. . . . Don't get angry with me again; I mean it quite seriously, and it is not only the fact that you are so unsuspecting that moves me. I wish I were capable of reconciling your touching conceptions with the truth, particularly for my own sake, for what must I appear?—a blackguard and a vagabond, like that repulsive old Wurm in Schiller's *Intrigue and Love*; but I hardly know; I don't know, one would have to be a Tolstoy in order to depict. . . . Perhaps it would interest you to know that I knew Anna Jahn before she had ever met her future brother-in-law . . . oh, you knew that somehow? She was the first woman who . . . well, well, how shall I express it? . . . she was an appari-

tion that made one pause. I still clearly remember the evening I saw her for the first time; it was at a little party at Frau von Hardenberg's; she was standing next to a Chinese vase, a yard and a half high, and her head was resting lightly on her arm. She was seventeen years old, but nature had nothing more to do; everything was so perfectly finished, so mysteriously complete. My impression was: That girl is so proud that under certain circumstances she might bleed to death in her pride. Well, what was the nature of that pride? Pride? One utters a word like that and forgets that it has a thousand meanings, from the most superficial to the most profound. I have only met one person with whom pride became fate, and that was she. I was . . . tremendously fascinated, at any rate, and this had its consequences. The teachings of the Sikhs of India say: 'If a man is separated from his soul and the yearning of his soul, he does not remain standing in the road, but hastens upon his wanderings.' I think you understand. It was fatality. Among human beings the compounds—contrary to what holds good in chemistry—are more capable of reaction than the simple elements. In her that world was incarnate into which I had had to translate myself to the last fibre of my nerves. I first understood the meaning of my existence through her own. That was how it was. We understood each other very well. That is, she listened to me very well. I have never, not in my whole life, not even in you, little Mohl, seen so attentive, so eager, so breathless a face turned towards mine. In my youth I could take people by storm in conversation; I could kindle them with infinite enthusiasm; I could . . . what could I not do? . . . I could give them their own souls over again. It was the same with men and with women. They no longer resisted me; they would see with my eyes, feel what I made them feel. Their hearts would become courageous; they began to understand parables; for the higher world is accessible only through parables. To me the communication of ideas was second nature, my real nature, like the pulse of my arteries; where I could communicate my thought, I had already identified myself with the recipient; it was the most sublime form of love, of the love of both men and women, a tire-

less wooing, to drive others out of themselves, to free them from all barriers and reserves. I myself had none, neither barriers nor reserves; that was just it; you must understand that after all this. As regards women, I could not do without them. They had an easy time with me. I was simply tinder. I never weighed what was at stake for me. I was not saving with my person; I can indeed truthfully say that I lavished myself like a man who has fifty lives. Some of my friends made fun of me; they said I beheld a Helen in every woman. Nonsense. One must have knelt before many altars to know how inaccessible are the gods and goddesses, especially when one has sacrificed in vain. When the real Helen came it appeared, oh, my prophetic Rochow, that this time she was really the daughter of Nemesis."

He walked up and down for a while in silence. Etzel's glance was fastened upon three loathsome cockroaches which were crawling in single file over the bare boards. But he did not really see them; he was only listening. "What took place between us," continued Warschauer, "is no longer of importance; not in this connection. The pragmatic does not play any part in this affair. One loses thereby the broad point of view, and reduces an experience to a romance." (A wretched pretext, thought Etzel; now he is refusing to speak about the most important thing of all; and actually, for a few moments, Warschauer stammered uncertainly.) "The decisive thing was this: I was fighting for her, but she . . . she was fighting for . . . yes, for what? For a picture of herself that was worlds removed. If only she had fought for herself, yes, then . . . but for reputation, for what one owed to one's honour, and because one must be on one's guard . . . godless, godless, godless! The morality of refined circles; a chocolate-box morality; godless! I threw my time at her feet, as wastefully as any fool; a woman does not understand what that means, a man's time; she swallows it like lemonade, swallows as much of it as one will give her, and if she wants to go and try on a hat, she, for her part, has no time left for you. She had talents; she might have become something; but she had no reverence, no faith—except that she went to confession every Sunday; a human mission meant nothing to

her. One ought to have torn her open; she was as close as an unripe nut. I, well, I was no saint, no worshipper from afar . . . what was I to do?" (He struck himself on the breast, resonantly, with the flat of his hand.) "What was I to do? I knew perfectly well that breaking the vessel would not open her soul to me; but there is, in such cases, a desire for revenge. I got the better of her, and it was I who was defeated. Perhaps I was crazy. I did the stupidest things. I lied to her, telling her that I was the son of a reigning prince. At the same time I multiplied my energies tenfold; I slaved like a Chinese coolie. But that sort of passion was mysterious to her. She was, after all, a German girl; you understand. It was too much for her; she was enveloped in her conventions as in an iron corset. She had a feeling that I was 'queer.' She sensed the alien blood; it repulsed her; she was entranced, and a little afraid. The more light I poured over her, the gloomier grew her mood. Unravel me that. Not on any account to be carried away; not that, for God's sake; she would submit, she would tolerate, yes. She did not know that she could have bound me had she only let herself go; that I should have taken root if she had prepared the ground for me; but she could not understand that, this German Helen; that was beyond her horizon. There was an open break. She wandered from city to city until her sister sent for her. And what happened? There, there was a mission to her liking, waiting for her. A motherless child to care for, a lyrical weakling to prop up, who did not demand the revelation of a soul, for his own was as open as the door of a tavern; he needed a little of the halo of the martyr, a little aunt-like sympathy, a little admiration; one could play the governess, the unapproachable, the mediator; the rôle was perfectly in keeping; one was adored; and one risked nothing. Without doubt they would have been decently and peacefully happy together; it would have been one of those marriages in which the husband has the position of a lackey and the wife—God knows how it happens—is a virgin at forty, even though she may have borne half a dozen children. Undoubtedly it would have been so had Maurizius still been free. But as it was they were hurried into the suffocating bourgeois

tragedy in which suppressions, repressions and complexes flourish like a contagious eruption; the conflict between love and duty; the respect for sacred ties; the dread of gossip and calumny; a cowardly playing with fire; a rivalry between the sisters; a secret correspondence; forbidden courses and a bad conscience. The whole phrasemongering tempest of perverse conflicts fought itself out, and the pitiful end came like a hammer-stroke, and must have come whether I intervened or not. And should I perhaps not have interfered? They were so pitiful, all three of them; they fluttered in their blind confusion like birds round a disturbed nest, and the whole sorry comedy was simply crying out for a *deus ex machina* to take things in hand; they could no longer find their bearings without me; they had no will left; only instinct, only fear. My Galatea, my Helen, ravished by a fool! If at least he had been a Paris, but he was not even the ghost of one! I found her again besmirched, dragged in the mire; her whole being was imploring to be saved; and what was she without me?—but she would not have it so; and when I fished her out of the pool she was a corpse. I mean that she no longer had a soul. She walked the earth, to be sure; she ate and drank what was necessary, bought herself clothes, visited museums, and read books, and she was . . . a corpse. I am no Christ; I could not raise Jairus's daughter from the dead. On the contrary, I was at that time a broken man; I had been dropped as though at the word of command. Not a dog was willing to take a crust of bread from me; my most eager patrons no longer recognized me; people were no longer at home to me; they did not remember that they had exchanged ideas and hatched plans of action with me; my letters came back unopened; my funds gave out. There was nothing left for me to do but to strike my tent and, like crazy Johanna with the corpse of her husband, to quit the country with a soulless, half-dead woman. To move farther west."

He went over to the window and drummed so loudly on the pane that Etzel, tortured by nervous suspense, involuntarily pressed his hands to his ears. After a while he ventured to cross the room and pulled at the other's coat. "For heaven's sake, stop

that!" he said in a low voice. Warschauer let his arm sink to his side, but he did not turn round.

"And what was that about the *deus ex machina*?" whispered Etzel. "That's the most interesting of all. . . ."

Warschauer made a gesture of dismissal. "Maybe; for the moment it doesn't interest me," he replied, abruptly. "Do you see that figure over there at the window? Of course not; you can't see so far, you poor salamander. A naked woman. She is washing her feet. Really beautiful. Peaceful and lovely. Perhaps she is young and pretty; I can't see; she is sitting in the shadow, but if she's young and pretty let us be grateful to her for her carelessness. Life does not pass us over entirely. But I fear it is an illusion, and that she is really a dirty old jade."

"Good God, what beastly things you sometimes say; what is that strange woman to us?" said Etzel. "Yes, yes, what is that strange woman to us?" repeated Warschauer, in a curiously disconsolate voice. Etzel looked up in surprise, and then dropped his eyes in shame. Warschauer laughed harshly, and his voice sounded broken. "I stood once like that at a window" (he began to narrate without any transition, leaning his forehead against the window-pane) "one night in a small French town, in a little empty inn, late in the autumn; I stood at the window, looking out, and in the window opposite I saw a girl playing a violin. One couldn't hear anything; one could only see the secret emotion with which she moved her bow to and fro, and her delicate figure shimmering through the white curtains; and behind me, as you are now standing behind me, little Mohl, stood . . . Anna. Our trunks were packed; we were to leave the next day; she for Paris, I for Cherbourg. We had come to the end."

After a pause, he spoke of the last ten thousand francs which he had lost at baccarat. There were still four thousand left, the remainder of Anna's fortune; they divided it, and this shadow of a woman, who had accompanied him to the edge of this precipice, perhaps for no other reason than that she had never found an abiding place anywhere in the world, parted from him with the same lethargy with which she had accompanied him. Paris? Very

well, Paris. And then? She did not know. A withered leaf in the wind. For the last year, although at that time he was still Gregor Waremme, and surrounded by the aura of his dead fame, he had ceased to live as an intellectual being. He had not been willing to admit his desperate disappointment; he had simply gone on playing his part, an actor without an audience, playing to empty benches. But the actor had become a gambler; it was only a change of masks. The gambler, he said, was a bastard of the imagination; only the man who despised possessions could play for high stakes. He had not yet fully and intimately realized the frightful *débâcle* of his life; he dreamed of wealth, and regarded his exile as temporary; the loss of consideration was a question of time. His aim was to make six or seven hundred thousand marks out of the hundred thousand which Anna had inherited; this seemed easy to him; with this sum he could then build a golden bridge for his return. It was now his business to compel fortune, day after day, night after night, desperately bored and embittered as he was. When all was gone he came to his senses. "I understood, like a man walking out of an opium den on a frosty morning, that there was no foothold left for me in Europe. But the idea of crossing the ocean was at first only a dream. There, too, I dreamed at first only of some chance good fortune; after which my native land would apologize for the injustice it had done me, and receive me again with open arms. So profound was my infatuation. But during the night I have just mentioned I saw the true picture of my past life; it stared at me like a monster from the underworld. I knew at last that there was no return. The only alternatives were—a bullet through my brain, or burning my boats; never again to look back; to lose myself, an unknown person in an unknown world. That is what happened. But, my good Mohl, there were years. . . . I am afraid it is beyond my power to give you any conception of them. . . ." He stalked back into the room, went over to the opposite wall, and crouched down on a low pile of books, with his head bowed. The white bristles on his skull glittered like hoarfrost. Etzel made himself as small as possible and was absolutely still. He would

have liked to creep into the stove, just to listen to Warschauer, without being seen by him any longer.

3

It was not a narrative with a definite outline. There was no story with exciting crises. The history had not even a proper beginning; there were no pauses, no climaxes. Only pictures flashed out from time to time that reminded one of flashes of summer lightning over dismal and monotonous wastes. (Etsel knew these flashes of lightning; he had seen them over the North Sea, where he had spent a few weeks of the holidays with his father, three years ago, at the Sydows'.) Yes, Warschauer's manner of speaking seemed to him like a dismal and monotonous expanse of ocean; the effervescence, the passionate exaggeration of his words were gone, and now all that he said seemed more actual. It was the difference between a speaker who is constantly shouting and making faces, so that one can't listen properly, and one who sits motionless, whom one can hardly see, and who simply talks and talks. . . . What Etsel heard drew him down like a screw—he had even the physical sensation of being sucked down; in all that he heard he was conscious of a monstrous, paralysing logic. Apparently what he was hearing had no immediate relation to his problem; but that did not disturb him; he would reconstruct the connection later, for it seemed to him somehow as though it was all simply a variation of the one thing, of the one "business", which must at some time, somehow, come to an issue.

Waremmé, then, left Europe with a complete consciousness of the finality of the step. An emigrant in the starkest sense of the word, an emigrant who no longer had a home. He had accepted the situation. He had to forget, he had to begin afresh. Nevertheless, the essential difficulty of his position had not been quite clear to him at the outset. To turn one's back upon Europe does not, after all, mean that one is able to live without it. He began to understand what Europe actually meant for such a man as himself: it meant not simply his own individual past, but the past of three hundred million people. It was at once what he knew of

that past, and what he carried in his own blood. It was not merely the land which had given him birth, but the image and the conformation of all the country between the North Sea and the Mediterranean, its atmosphere, its history, its transformations. Not merely this and that city in which he had lived, but hundreds of cities, and in those cities the cathedrals, palaces and fortresses, the works of art and the libraries, the footprints of great men. Was there a single incident in his own life that was unrelated to the generations of memories which had been born with him? Europe was not merely the sum-total of all the relations of his own individual existence: friendship and love, hatred and unhappiness, success and disappointment; it was, venerable and intangible, the life of a unity of two thousand years; Pericles and Nostradamus, Theodoric and Voltaire, Ovid and Erasmus, Archimedes and Gauss, Calderon and Dürer, Phidias and Mozart, Petrarch and Napoleon, Galileo and Nietzsche; an innumerable army of light-giving geniuses, and a no less innumerable army of demons; all the light driven down into darkness and shining forth from it again; a sordid slag that gave birth to a golden vessel; the catastrophes and inspirations, the revolutions and periods of darkness, the moralities and the fashions; all that vast community, with its currents, its concatenations, its storeys and pinnacles: the human intellect itself. That was Europe, *his* Europe. How could he separate himself from this Europe? It was in him. He carried it over the ocean with him. It was active in him when he merely breathed. He had accordingly, so it seemed to him, a task. As a missionary goes out to the heathen, so he "went over"—so it seemed to him—in order to proclaim the spirit of Europe.

"You can imagine, Mohl, what a magnificent conception I had of myself in this rôle. Columbus the Second. The apostle Paul of civilization and culture. With my head full of such highfalutin' ideas, I could to a certain extent settle down there. What one can learn from books about a country and its inhabitants I knew. I regarded my theoretical knowledge as a useful foundation; and in addition to this I knew the language as well as my

own; cultivated Englishmen had often expressed their astonishment at my perfect English. I had always had a gift for languages. But I had no connections. I did not know a soul. I had no introductions of any sort. I had not even a degree. I had wanted to teach in the universities, but that was impossible, for obvious reasons; I could not refer to my former activities; I was afraid of inquiries; I had no academic degree; the contempt which I had formerly felt for the approval of the masses revenged itself now; my applications were fruitless. Fortunately—for as matters then stood I should have been a pitiful figure in any academic chair—something like a teacher in an Indian village school. After a few weeks I was entirely destitute. That did not worry me much. No one can starve over there. The whole country is, so to speak, a huge scheme of insurance against starvation. The public charities are so gigantic that beggars are almost as scarce as kings. And they have democracy there. But the difference between living and not starving is another matter. Conceive of a tremendous hospital, furnished with every modern comfort, filled with the incurable sick, not one of whom ever dies, and you have what lies 'between'. Deaths would damage the reputation of the establishment. Well, you have convinced yourself during our acquaintance, I hope, that I am a person without any material needs. While I was living in the midst of the greatest social brilliance—except when I wanted to achieve certain ends—I wanted no more for my personal needs than any poor student. That is one of the qualities by means of which, under certain circumstances, one can do better than a genius. The drunkard and sensualist has faith only in the abstainer. I found it easy to earn my bread by giving lessons in languages. But I was limited thereby to the lower classes. I had not the money to dress decently or fashionably, nor had I the inclination; and little by little a certain defiance came over me, as though my shabby appearance had been a kind of self-protection. You will soon understand why I wanted this self-protection. The internal reasons were more significant. People of no importance, after all, would just put up with me. Such people do not demand the conventions of inter-

course; they still see something unstable in other persons, since they themselves are unstable—on the brink, I mean. The little people over there still have some shreds of Europe about them, a lost, flickering Europe, a faint reminiscence. The secure people, as soon as they merely began to be safe, were suspicious of me. I used words which they never used; I made allusions to things of which they had never heard. The sentences in which I spoke to them had a construction; there was a main clause and a subordinate clause. Never did the word dollar cross my lips. On the other hand, I liked to express myself in parables. And that meant intellect: something highly suspect, something overpowering, and the higher one ascended socially, the more suspect, the more overpowering it was. Of course, as time went on I became more careful and more modest. But even in my cleverly-devised, carefully-planned avoidance and elimination of intellect there was still intellect. What was I to do about it? I had not as yet the faintest comprehension of the country. I saw only one thing, that when a man exhibited a glimmer of intellect, no matter who he might be, the others went out of their way to avoid him, and his only way of making them forget his *faux pas* was eventually to do something, for example, like fishing a child out of the Mississippi in flood. No, they did not love the intellect; they loved the thing, the cause, the performance; they loved praise; they loved action; but intellect was to them mysterious beyond all measure. They had something in its place: a smile. I had to learn to smile. In San Francisco there was a barber's shop whose owner had the sublime idea, after the earthquake had destroyed the city, of putting up a placard on the door of his shop, which read: *Whoever comes in smiling will be shaved free of charge*. When I was told that, I slowly began to understand. A land of children. So I learned to smile. From that you may realize, my good Mohl, that I was confronted with an entirely new problem in adjustment; for me, a master of mimicry, far more difficult than anything that I had previously accomplished. Formerly I had had to accomplish everything in the intellect and through the intellect; now I could only keep going if I deadened my intellect

to the utmost; if, so to speak, I purged myself daily of my intellect. But those are *aperçus*, the afterbirths of experience; with such I can as little make you understand the essence of the business as if I were to assure you that yesterday's soup was too salt. I did not stay long in New York. There one is still on the edge of Europe; the temptation is too strong. Of my wanderings there is not much to be said. I went to Kansas City with the family of a clergyman; from Kansas I went south, and thence to the Middle West. One must accustom oneself to wandering, if one does not understand how to climb; to stop in one place means to go under; Jack tosses you to John, and John to Bill, and when Bill finds out that you are no longer of any use he leaves you to die on the scrap-heap—quite amiably, of course. 'Keep smiling!' When I got to Chicago, where I remained for ten and a half years, I fell ill; I was eight months in hospital. During my convalescence I made friends with a young negro, Joshua Cooper; an athlete, an innocent soul. When he laughed at you, you always felt as though it were Christmas. He was a clerk in a negro bank; through him I got to know other negroes; I taught them, or their sons. That did for me in white society. My career became more obscure; I let myself drift; I lost touch with the surface and reached the bottom. I met many Chinamen. I didn't do more than meet them; one can't get at them. Not there, where they have no roots. They live like worms in timber over there. The majority of them lead the most mysterious lives possible to human beings. Among them, a man is rarely what he appears to be; the cook is not a cook, nor the coal-heaver a coal-heaver. Many of them are in the service of an organization which is so strict and powerful that compared with it the Order of the Jesuits is as innocent as a girls' boarding-school. I often met a tea-merchant called Sun Chwong Chu; when I went to see him one day—I had a message for him—the yellow servant led me to a cellar where four of his friends were standing in silence around his corpse. An hour before he had collapsed without a sound; his face was swollen like a sponge. A murder without a murderer, dictated from eight thousand miles away. You are probably

thinking, 'what nonsense'; eh, my good Mohl? But one must have experienced it; in that country, the horrible has not yet been weakened by the quotation marks of culture. This city . . . when I open an atlas sometimes and look at it . . . situated in a certain geographical latitude and longitude, on the south shore of a certain enormous lake, a lake as enormous as everything else in that country, its water whitish like diluted milk; when I look at it—merely look at the dot which stands for it—I am filled with shuddering astonishment. So it really exists, I say to myself; when I was living there its reality was not quite so incontestable. If the human soul could grasp what enters into it as quickly as the eye sees and the intellect understands, no one could live through what happens in a year; no one, not even the most hardened; and I, by God, am hard enough. Many things pass through my mind, but if I try to retain them, they have no more substance than a feverish dream. . . . There are a few things that happened which I should like to talk about, because . . . how do the lines run in Shakespeare?

Heaven's face doth glow;
Yea, this solidity and compound mass,
With wistful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

Thought-sick? Well, I don't know. One is turned inside out, over and over. It is frightfully interesting. A picture-book, as rare as it is nerve-racking. But here first of all is something pretty. A prelude. One morning I was walking through the streets—they were full of warehouses—my ears lacerated by the din of machines and men bustling, rending and shrieking, when I heard a remarkable sound. The singing of birds, I thought in astonishment; the singing of birds, in this hell of filth and iron; but where do the birds come from, how is it that I can hear them? I went into a sort of alcove, and asked a negro, who waved me on with a grin; before me there was a wall of cages; thirty thousand canaries, which had just been unpacked, singing out of thirty thousand tiny throats; an orchestra, a stupendous concert, ridiculously and enchantingly drowning the clangour of cranes and motors and

locomotives and the shouting of men. I stood there, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry; it was so crazy, so holy, so fairy-like. . . . Well, let us turn the pages. A summer afternoon; a heat that scorches one's lungs; the mazes of the stockyards; the sky a curious reddish yellow, the air sticky and thick enough to cut. Gangways miles long, wooden tunnels, labyrinths of tunnels, crossing the streets; bridges of death for the animals about to be slaughtered. A dull bellowing; oxen and calves in endless procession; a quiet, fateful trampling. At one particular place the hammer falls upon them; in a minute hundreds die and fall into the pit. It is oppressive to be there, so close to countless creatures which are about to die; I see them stepping forward, pushing and pushed, the necks of those in the rear resting on the flanks of those in front; from morning till night, day in, day out, year after year, with their great brown eyes full of foreboding and wonder; their plaintive lowing shakes the air; it may be that the invisible stars are shaken by it; the piers tremble with the weight of their bodies; the sweetish smell of blood rises from the tremendous halls and warehouses; a constant cloud of blood hangs over the whole city; the people's clothes smell of blood, their beds, their churches, their rooms, their food, their wines, their kisses. It is all so multitudinous, so intolerably immense; the individual person has hardly a name any longer; the individual thing has nothing, nothing to differentiate it. Numbered streets; why not numbered people, numbered, for example, according to the dollars they earn by the blood of cattle, by the soul of the world? . . . Another page. An autumn night, a night of wild storm and rain. There is a street, Halsted Street—I lived near it—it's thirty miles long, hopelessly long, as long as all the misery and wretchedness which it harbours; they call it the longest street in the world, and it is that; the new road to Golgotha. There are houses there which seem to consist only of refuse and garbage; they have to burn the garbage in front of the doors in order not to be stifled in it; there are dark dirty corners with ruined barracks in which a hundred families live in a dozen holes, so that the life that is crammed into them spills out of the windows, and on hot nights

men, women and babies lie about on the iron balconies, on top of one another, like sardines. There are bazaars where all the varieties of trash are sold which this tangled mass of worm-like humanity imagines that it needs for its nightmare existence. There is a swarm of cement-coloured children with greedy, criminal eyes; there is rust and dust and smoke, and mountains of shreds of paper, and broken-down automobiles, and commercial signs in every language in the world, and the stench of benzine, and the stench of sweat, and the fumes of blood. Well, to come to the point. I went out on the night that I have mentioned; some new tenants had moved in next door to me, an Irish family of five; all the money that they had saved had been stolen from them at the railway-station, and their despair set the whole house in commotion; their sobbing and complaining irritated me. I had an appointment at midnight with Joshua Cooper, who was going to Louisiana for a few months; he had asked me to meet him at a bar on Twenty-second Street: another delightful neighbourhood. Before I got there I heard a wild confused shouting; at first I thought it was the rain beating on the corrugated iron roofs; then I saw a gang of fellows running, and twenty feet ahead of them a colossal negro. Beyond a shadow of doubt, it was my Joshua. He was almost naked, they had torn his clothes off his back; he was literally flying, his good black face distorted with the fear of death; such an expression I have never seen before or since in any human being. He rushed along, swinging his legs in tremendous strides, his arms outstretched before him, and on his forehead, exactly in the middle, there gaped a little wound from which a thin stream of blood was running over his nose, mouth and chin. The few seconds while he was dashing by told me what was in store for him; it was all up with him. Already his pursuers were catching up. Twelve or fifteen youths. Howling like beasts, mad with rage. I was nailed to the spot. The storm carried away my umbrella; I didn't even notice it; my hat was gone; I was standing at the corner of a street; I didn't realize it. I have already said that I am a hard devil, but at that time . . . run, my good friend, run, Joshua,

I stammered aloud to myself; those twelve or fifteen fellows . . . there was nothing of the human being left about them. Beasts? Why, any beast has the soul of a Quaker compared with theirs. They were people to whom robbing and murder was a business; they were people who silence you by a blow in the face, and think less of it than others of breaking a window; Acherontian figures, the two-legged carrion of the slums; we haven't that kind in this country; the most depraved fellow here still reminds one that a mother bore him. Their most infamous trick consists in hatching crimes which are then ascribed to the negroes; this sort of thing, of course, proceeds from a central body—as used to happen in Russia, when the Jews were massacred—and is called lynch law. No, not if I grow to be as old as Methuselah shall I ever forget my Joshua fleeing before those howling brutes, with the swiftness of a ghost, the stream of blood running over his innocent black face, and his arms stretched out in front of him. I never saw him again, I never heard of him again. God knows where his carcase is rotting.”

4

Warschauer got up heavily, walked over to Etzel, who was sitting on the edge of the sofa, and tapped him on the forehead with his finger, once, twice, until the boy raised his eyes to him. The picture of the negro running through the stormy night with the blood trickling over his face was almost beyond endurance; he felt cold to the very bowels; involuntarily he made a parrying gesture. “Well, little boy,” said Warschauer, sitting down beside him and placing his hand upon his shoulder, “have you had enough of it?” Etzel shook his head. “I shan’t have enough until . . .” and he stopped; his brows were knitted.—“Well—until . . .?”—“Until I know everything about you, everything, everything!” Warschauer shook his head with ironic concern. “Everything is quite a lot; everything, everything—that’s your usual presumptuousness, Mohl. But you are in luck; I am in full swing. If you will give me your hand a little, your delicate, aristocratic little hand, and let me hold it between my paws, I’ll

be a nice uncle, and will go on spinning my yarn." Almost greedily he snatched at the hand, Etzel unwillingly enduring a tenderness which was repulsive to him, only because it was demanded as a payment. The gas-flame sputtered, and a fat black fly buzzed about among the papers on the desk.

The monotonous speech, reminiscent of the drone of a precentor, began again. Etzel succeeded in freeing his hand from the soft, clammy hand enclosing it, but was careful to avoid any other motion. "It would be a false conception, little Mohl, if you were to think of me over there as a sort of Isaiah foretelling the destruction of the world in raging and flaming prophecies. Not a bit of it. In the first place, downfall is unthinkable over there; a conception discovered by a few literary philosophers in order to create a sensation in respect of the spiritual catalepsy which has overtaken Europe; in the second place, the seeing eye acts as a safety-valve for the suffering heart. Since most people are struck with blindness, they suffer all the more. The man who sees grows cold; a cruel truth, but if it were not so, how could we, you and I, get out of bed every morning, put on our shirts and socks again, read the newspapers once more, and once again go to Frau Bobike's? How would that be possible? And as for me, I suffer exclusively from myself. To suffer from others is extravagant. Let a man only suffer enough from himself and he need not fear petrification. We know far more of one another than . . . we know. I had a burden to carry. I had things behind me. You know, at least, of some of them. I had to be careful to remove Waremme's sting, you understand; that gradually became a cardinal point. I had to calculate, to calculate. The Jew exists in order to calculate. That is what God intended him for. Warschauer *versus* Waremme, you understand. Plaintiff and defendant. Europe and the past; America and the future; more and more this became the *leitmotiv*. And don't imagine that I shall ever waste another word over that damned Maurizius affair; that is done with, I tell you; I don't intend to waste another thought on it; you can do what you like." For some minutes he maintained a curiously threatening silence; then, as

Etzel did not speak, he continued: "That was the story of my friend Joshua. From my point of view he was a martyr. To-day martyrs no longer arouse very much attention; there are too many of them. I myself don't take any stock in martyrs. They are an obstacle; they keep things back. One must shape one's destiny. Any idiot can succumb and sacrifice himself. The East has given us this superstition of martyrdom, this adoration of martyrs. There, for example, is the Russian soul, covering millions of square miles of earth, and celebrating orgies of martyrdom. That's bad, my dear Mohl. What is lacking is the effort, simply the modest little effort of summing oneself up. I went about over there in ignorance for a long while; until a man opened my eyes. You must hear about this man, for it is through him that I am where I now am. He was in a certain sense the first link in a long chain. His name was La Due, Hamilton La Due. A moderately well-to-do merchant, forty or forty-two years of age. He was born in the West, on the Pacific coast, where a fresh, gay, unprejudiced, childlike people dwells. His culture was about equal to that of a German recruiting-sergeant; his personal charm was something which one does not find in this part of the world. Not that he was in the least handsome or elegant; nothing of that sort; he was a stoutish, short-necked, clumsy, stuttering fellow; but sympathy and kindness and guilelessness poured out of him like steam out of a kettle. He had a host of acquaintances in the city, but of what he actually did—apart from his trade, I mean—no one had any real conception. I suppose it was just that he got out of himself by plunging into something different, with the secret delight of a child playing a forbidden game. I got to know him when I was inquiring one day at the reformatory for a young girl who had been there some time on account of drunkenness. I was standing at the bottom of the steps when a green police-van drove up, as big as a pantechicon, and out of this huge vehicle, quite alone, there jumped a little boy of perhaps twelve; sullen and morose, he sprang up the steps two at a time, just like an *habitué* of the place, and had almost disappeared through the entrance—the

policemen could hardly follow him—when my La Due came out, seized him quickly by the collar, and asked him what was the matter. Well, and what was the matter? He had stolen a pen-holder and an ink-eraser in school. A criminal, and one who had been previously convicted, too. Just think of it: a pen-holder and an ink-eraser. La Due went at once with him into the office, and then came back, leading the boy by the hand. He had stood bail for him. He told me about it, laughingly. I have never yet met anyone so easy to talk to. 'Come along with me,' he suggested; 'I have something to do in the district prison.' He deposited the boy in some shop or other, and then took me with him to Maxwell Street. On the way he forced a cake of chocolate on me, apparently because he found it very unpleasant to be in anybody's society without being able to give him something. He always had his pockets full; he was constantly distributing cigarettes, boxes of figs, little volumes of poetry, a stick of sealing-wax, little paper fans: whatever he happened to have with him. And all the while he was laughing and stammering, gazing about him curiously with his opossum face, calling out 'Hello, Frank', across the street, or slapping Henry encouragingly on the shoulder as he went by. In Maxwell Street a Jew immigrant who had recently arrived from Kiev had been arrested on the charge of falsifying his papers of origin; but he protested that he was innocent, and La Due had interested a lawyer in his case; he was to meet the lawyer at the prison. When we arrived, the lawyer was not yet there; we waited a while in the so-called board-room, where there was a pestilential smell. La Due tripped gaily about the room, singing; he looked as though it were his birthday. A hideous uproar made us go up to the first floor; they had arrested six negroes and negresses, I no longer remember why; figures out of the Inferno; there were two prostitutes among them, and a leprous old man, dancing about on one leg with rage. La Due took part in the negotiations; in five minutes he had appeased the howling, squabbling group; one of the furies, the most witch-like one, thickly rouged, with a goitre, was joking with him, waving her little Japanese parasol, which she still kept open over her

head, to and fro with horrible coquetry. It was a scene that gave me goose-flesh. I stepped into the street for a moment; the confusion of people, motor-cars and lorries, the whirling eddies of refuse, the sombre red-brick buildings, the screaming colours of the advertisements, the leaden sky . . . it was one of those moments when one no longer understands one's own existence. Perhaps you are on the moon, I thought; perhaps this is a city in the moon, and these are its inhabitants, living their spectral and dæmonic life in a wilderness of craters and lava. And then suddenly La Due stood before me, with his beaming birthday-face; he had cut a great California orange, as big as a coconut, in two, and he handed me half of it. He had bought a whole basketful, and the gang of negro prisoners had at once seized upon it; the officials gave their permission with a shrug of their shoulders. At last the lawyer came, and we were taken to see the imprisoned Jew; he was cowering in a cage; the whole prison consisted of iron cages like that in which the Jew was cowering. When he saw us he began to sob aloud. La Due sat down beside him on his wooden bed, tenderly stroked his head, and asked him to tell us how it had all happened. The man became like another person; in a dialect which one could hardly understand he explained his misfortune; it really seemed that he was the victim of treachery; in any case, La Due was able to reassure him as to his prospects. The curious thing was how he had ever heard of him, or of the hundreds and hundreds of others for whom he was constantly running to and fro. That remained a riddle to me. Little by little I became fairly familiar with his life, since he took German lessons from me; I don't know to this day whether he wanted to help me, or whether he was really so eager to learn. He had no assistants; he went on his hunting expeditions into the slums alone; he was not advised or directed by anyone. The thing was obviously based on a kind of snow-ball system. For example, after he had helped the Jew in Maxwell Street six other Jewish immigrants at once appealed to him. Jews were particularly dear to his heart; Jews and negroes. What he accomplished he did himself according to his own lights, as man to man. He had

no welfare people around him or backing him up. He was not swimming in the great stream of philanthropy. He was completely indifferent as to whence the millions expended in philanthropy came and how they were spent. Perhaps he was hardly conscious that his own activities belonged to quite a different category of human service. He never allowed himself to pass judgment on anyone or anything; he was too respectful for that, and thought too little of himself. I said to him once that all the social welfare work was a thimbleful of milk in a quart of ink. He looked at me sadly. 'Really, do you think so; is that so?' he asked; and he shook his head disconsolately. I am sure he had no admiration for wholesale benevolence; but there was one person, a woman, the Samaritan of Hull House, the founder of the Juvenile Aid Society, whom he worshipped on bended knees. One merely had to mention her name, and his eyes grew moist. One day he came to me in an unusual state of excitement, and told me of something that had happened the night before. A fourteen-year-old boy had come to Hull House in a state of terror and had asked to speak to Miss Blank; and when he was told that Miss Blank had gone to bed he had thrown himself on the floor, thrashing about in despair. Miss Blank must come, Miss Blank must come. So Miss Blank was sent for; she knew the boy; he was one of her protégés. Alone with her, he fell on his knees and implored her to save him; the police were after him; he had killed his father. And why? For months, night after night, with the terrible stupidity of a machine, his father had cruelly misused his mother; the boy could not look on any longer, and he had stabbed his father in the back with a kitchen knife. I wish I had witnessed what happened then; it must have been something quite unprecedented. La Due had gone to Hull House at midnight; he used often to call, as he got certain tips there; he had the story fresh from Miss Blank's own lips, and afterwards he took the boy, who had become quite submissive, to the police-station. He pictured the incident with his Southern vivacity. Miss Blank had listened to the boy, and had then proceeded, gently but firmly, to persuade him to give himself up and confess to the

deed. He refused, passionately. He had not done anything wrong; he had sent a vile beast out of the world, nothing more; the world was a better place to live in with that brute no longer in it; the deed deserved praise, not punishment; not imprisonment, no, no, no! His eyes blazed; the boy was all aglow. To live was his right; to have done away with that monster was his right; father or no father, that did not matter to him, and anyone to whom it did matter had no heart in his body and no sense in his head; such a person couldn't know how that brute had tortured his poor wife; and so on. Miss Blank knew the boy's obstinacy; he was one of her most gifted *protégés*, but tremendously wild and uncontrolled. With the utmost effort she slowly convinced him that he had no right to take anyone else's life—I am only repeating what she said, for that is by no means my view; why shouldn't one excise such an ulcer from the body of the human race?—however, what I think about it is irrelevant. She persuaded him that for his own sake, for the sake of his own honour and pride, he must take his punishment; the crime could not be concealed; how shameful if they had to search for him, and arrest him; if instead of giving himself up like a man and a hero, he were to seem a coward and a liar; how then could she ever believe in him again? That was the chief purport of her talk—that then she could no longer believe in him; that made the deepest impression. In the end she softened him; he fell on her neck, weeping; his resistance was broken. It had taken hours and hours; arguments and counter-arguments, examples and confessions, hesitations and relapses, with pleas and reasons and appeals on either side. I am only telling you this to show you what sort of people they are over there, how strong and unyielding, how mutually accessible, how closely intertwined. What La Due did afterwards for the boy was less decisive, though not less important. Thanks to his tireless efforts, the boy's punishment was a light one, La Due having interested the newspapers in his case and paid one of the best lawyers out of his own pocket. The better I got to know him the more he emerged from his modest shell. I saw a human being who, for all his insignificant exterior,

stood for a whole: the crystal, so to speak, formed from the raw material. There might be innumerable persons like him, and the more I looked into this tremendous complex the more I became convinced that he actually was only one of countless men like himself; one whom I had accidentally discovered. This shook my European pride profoundly, just as an Alexandrine Greek might perhaps have been disconcerted had he accidentally met a gentle Nazarene in Gaul. But a Nazarene. . . . La Due had no message, he was no evangelist; he had his simple childlike friendliness; nothing more. He had no moral principles, no Puritanism, none of the 'He that is not with me is against me'. He probably did not think about matters at all. He accepted everything as it was, the terrible and the pleasant alike. He never grumbled; he never scolded; he never showed any irritation; he was never out of humour. If he was dog-tired, and someone asked him the way, he would, if possible, take that person to his destination, and entertain him into the bargain with his cheerful chatter. When Ethel Green, the great film star, was shot by a jealous lover, he was beside himself with grief; he was just as distressed as any shop-girl. Yes, he even made a pilgrimage to her coffin, as did a hundred thousand others. For he was precisely like all the rest; and yet he seemed something magical amidst the mass; magical, like the focus of a lens. In that enormous nation, with its enormous cities, its enormous mountains and rivers and prairies, its enormous riches and enormous poverty, its enormous factories and its enormous dread of anarchy and revolution: there, in the midst of all that, we find this harmless little La Due . . . how shall I put it?—like a new kind of human being. I could not stop wondering at him. Through him I learned to understand that the whole is still an unleavened mass. 'Oh, we are so young!' he was always saying, with his naïve enthusiasm; 'we are so terribly, wonderfully young!' And that is it, that is the fact. The period of preparation. A melting-pot of the nations. Still mixing, still becoming. It has not cooled yet. South and North, East and West, all pressing towards the centre. A white world and a black world in close juxtaposition; the negro, a creditor with old debts

to collect, ceaselessly pushing onwards, invading whole sections of cities, overflowing provinces, with Asia behind him as a sinister threat; and then the really fateful adversary, Russia, preparing for a world duel; Russia, on the other side of the planet. . . . What was there for me to do over there, with my imaginary intellectual mission? What should I, burdened with the things of the intellect, find to do over there? There was matter, matter, matter; after a hundred years one might begin to talk of a soul. Contrasted with this glowing crater, Europe was a museum of antiquities. I had gone far enough west in every sense to be able to turn round with a clear conscience. Without any action on my own part, whether external or internal, I felt that I was being driven back to the point from which I had started. The rebirth of George Warschauer was inevitable. I had been growing more and more familiar with the lives of the millions of Jewish immigrants; Hamilton La Due had for many years been at home in the world of the ghetto; his best friends were among the Russian Jews. 'Those are wonderful people', he would exclaim, whenever he had a chance of praising them: 'wonderful people!' and he would tell me story after story of their pride and devotion and gratitude. There is a historical and psychological process going on over there, a fusion of elements, which, because of the differences of blood, is producing something like a new kind of soul. I played my part in this melancholy life. Washed up on an alien shore, the broken salvage of European catastrophes, these Jews, under their cloak of Oriental lethargy, move with a breathless speed. I associated with Chassidic scholars; I buried myself in the study of our ancient writings, and I saw what I had missed. I could no longer make up for it. From a certain day onwards I felt myself to be suddenly old. I had not put anything into the granary; to the times which I saw coming I had nothing to give. That meant: I must seek safety. I must find some little place of refuge between the two raging furnaces to the right and the left of me. It would not be a Tusculum; it would be, at best, a concealed observation-post, into which I had carried a few faint embers, relics of the mighty oriflamme of the past. Which tempest

will extinguish this mournful relic: that from the right or that from the left? Which do you think, Mohl? For during the decades since my flight from myself and my quest through the world, that drowsy *moujik* has been stretching his limbs; everywhere there has been an uprising of the people, from the Vistula to Lake Baikal. We have got to be prepared for something; the good people over here, bogged up to their ears in their vacillating desires, haven't the slightest inkling of what is ahead of them; they dream of the heritage of the knout, of taking possession of this heritage; meanwhile they listen with rapture to their gramophones wailing the ancient songs of lamentation: *eï uchnemj*. . . . Do you know that, Mohl? The song of the Volga boatmen, an incomparable tocsin; and they enthuse about it as if it were a pious chorale . . . have you never heard it?"

He stood up, extended his arms and tramped up and down with his regimental drummer's step, singing in a voice of terrifying power: "*Eï uchnemj . . . eï uchnemj . . . eschtsche razikj . . . eschtsche dararj . . . eï uchnemj. . . .*"



5

Etzel too had risen to his feet; he stood as though extinguished. The cheek which had rested on his hand was a fiery red; the other was white. He had thrust his knuckles into his mouth and was biting them raw. His feverish eyes were full of terror and an utter perplexity. God, God, he thought, with a faltering heart: it is as though one had been in swaddling-clothes up to now! One must shut one's ears; one can't go on listening; one must look away; that fat fellow with his powerful body will trample one to death; everything about him is larger than life; a Polyphemus flinging rocks. . . . How is one to get hold of him, how is one to get him back to the one thing one has come for, for which one has taken all this upon one, all this, of which, in one's pitiful

ignorance, one hadn't the slightest notion? . . . Etzel felt as though he were running after an express train with a wheelbarrow.

His hopes had dwindled to nothing. How could his poor speech contend with this cataract of words; what could he do, in his ignorance and his sixteen years, when confronted by this world-embracing brain? What did this man care about the prisoner in the penitentiary; what did the six thousand odd days and nights of imprisonment, for a crime of which that prisoner was not guilty, mean to him? And now there was yet another day, and yet another night; this very night was one night more; but what did that matter to him? His was an alien, a different experience; he knew of other horrors; to him all this was like water running off a duck's back; what was the misfortune of one man, the guilt of another, to him? He had constructed a system of justice in which the individual did not count; *ad usum delphini*, presumably. One had been so near; another question, perhaps, and one would have discovered the secret; one ought to have insisted with: please, just a moment, what was that about a *deus ex machina*? Instead of that he had dragged one along with his accursed Waremmé-Warschauer problem; he had made a fool of one, and now one was biting one's knuckles raw. He summoned up all his courage, and when Warschauer had finished singing he stepped in front of him, and said: "With all this we have got quite away from Maurizius."—"Yes, we have, you revolting little toad!" replied Warschauer, furiously; "have done with your slimy exudations!"—"I can readily believe you don't want to hear any more about it!" continued Etzel, bitterly; "but the toad must croak, even if it risks being devoured by the eagle." Warschauer bowed sarcastically. "A ready wit!" he said mockingly, "a quick-witted toad!" Etzel's face was burning; a challenging laugh escaped his lips. "The thing doesn't give you any peace yourself," he said. "Your oath, professor, think of your oath! It may be that you have forgotten it, but I don't believe that *it* has forgotten; *it*, you know, there inside you"; and he pointed his finger at Warschauer's breast. The latter retreated a step in

silence. "Yes," insisted Etzel, in a fit of tumultuous audacity: "There is no cheating *that*; that is what has sent you wandering round the world; it's for *that* you have to atone, you, and the man in the penitentiary, and the old man, and I; yes, yes, a grain of guilt and a bushel of suffering! Yes, yes, yes! . . ." He was suddenly as though beside himself.

Warschauer pressed his lips together, went silently to the door, and opened it wide. "Young Mohl," he said, coldly, "you may regard yourself as put out. Out you go!" Etzel hesitated, growing paler. Warschauer looked out into the dark courtyard. "*Ei uchnemj*," he began to sing once more, as though he were already alone; but he interrupted himself immediately, to say commandingly to the boy: "Well, are you going?"—"I haven't any latch-key, I can't get out," said Etzel, obstinately. Warschauer took the key from his pocket and held it out. Etzel took it and walked slowly across the threshold. Warschauer banged the door after him. While Etzel felt his way down the stairs he again heard through the closed door the "*Ei uchnemj*", like an ironical refrain. Tears of anger and helplessness clouded his vision.

The front door was open. In the hall the Paalzow boy was leaning against the wall, holding a whispered conversation with a suspicious-looking character. When he saw Etzel he twisted his body in his direction and stared venomously in his face, his hands in his trousers' pockets. Etzel paid no attention to him, and walked on. "I'd like to meet you sometime in the moonlight," the Paalzow boy called after him, threateningly. "Really? What do you want the moonlight for?" replied Etzel, over his shoulder. Then it was that his strength suddenly forsook him, and he lay down in front of the gin-shop. Perhaps a sort of terror of ghosts had something to do with his collapse; it was the first time, as far as he could remember, that he had ever had such a feeling; but now, at every street-corner, he felt that the huge negro, with his arms outstretched, and the thread of blood running down his face, was rushing towards him. He did not, however, feel any better lying down on the steps; his nerves were strained to the breaking point; he could see wooden bridges with endless pro-

cessions of cattle moving over them, and it seemed to him as though he heard the *Ei uchnemj* painfully roaring from their thousand throats. He saw the Jew sobbing in his iron cage, and the eleven-year-old murderer striking the kitchen knife into his father's back. He saw Hamilton La Due kissing the suppurating wounds of a leper, and the Chinaman lying in the cellar with his friends around him. And interfering all the time with the other pictures was the negro with the thread of blood running down his face, fleeing in crazy terror from his pursuers. "Oh, God! Mother!" he sighed, like a little boy, when at last he got on to his feet and staggered along toward the Anklamerstrasse.

On the top of everything else he was, of course, extremely tired. When he put his watch on the table beside his bed it was twenty minutes to five, and the dawn was pale outside the windows. There was no need to light the lamp. Accustomed, before he lay down, to sprinkle insect-powder over the red cotton pillows and the coarse linen sheets, which were spotted with his blood, he did so even now. He fell asleep at once; he slept as though he had been intoxicated. A red-hot wheel with saw-like edges whirled madly against his breast; this was a nightmare of his earliest childhood, which sometimes recurred; he knew in his sleep that he was feverish; bed-bugs as big as the cockroaches in Warschauer's room crept over his neck and face; Frau Schneevogt came and put the breakfast-tray on the table; he was aware of this in his sleep, and he slept on, sleepless in the depths of his soul. Shortly afterwards, so it seemed, the woman came in with lunch; grumbling, she removed the untouched breakfast; he saw and heard her in his waking sleep; he felt the fiery saw again, and thought: If it cuts me, God will be doing me an injustice; I must first speak to my mother . . . and that other thing . . . another day gone by. . . . At last he opened his eyes, and his head was clear; his nightshirt was hot and wet and clinging to his body; his legs were so heavy that he could not move them. I'm ill, he thought; that's the last straw. I've been plaguing myself with that wicked devil for six weeks, and I know no more than I knew before; nothing, not a thing. What

will happen if I am going to be ill? It simply mustn't be; it's wasting too much time. Why did Anna Jahn go to France with him? That didn't come about by fair play; he simply glossed over that; it's the most mysterious part of the whole story. Whatever shall I do? I had better wait now until he comes here; I won't move; he will be sorry, and come; then I shall have the advantage of him. . . . He had a vision; his seething brain achieved a remarkable clairvoyance, for what he saw came to pass later on; he saw Warschauer there in the room, walking up and down with his drummer's step, and then . . . did he then talk of "the case"? His clairvoyance did not extend so far; his wishes dared no longer play at reality. . . . Why am I so cold? he thought; it's lucky that it's already June, so that I needn't have a fire. . . .

Melitta's hard voice sounded from the next room. He listened. They must not notice that I am ill, he thought; if they do they may send me to the hospital, where they'll ask for my papers, and that would mean a filthy mess. What's the matter with me, anyway? A sore throat; I can't swallow decently; it will all be over by to-morrow. . . . And in order to make as good an impression as possible, in case one of the Schneevogt women should enter the room, he took a volume of Ghisels' from the shelf which he had put up on the wall, and opened it. Then once more he heard Melitta's hard voice from the next room; it was saying, desperately: "Such injustice cries to heaven. A thing like that makes one want to spit on the whole human race. One might as well take a rope and hang oneself." The wall was so thin, and the door closed so imperfectly, that he could hear every word, and also the anxious attempts of mother Schneevogt to appease the girl. The door-bell interrupted them; both women left the room, and all was quiet. She said the right thing, thought Etzel, as with wide eyes, and an oppressive feeling of a debt unpaid, he stared up at the ceiling: how can one bear it? And everyone goes on living; even those who say they can't; and I too. What is all this about justice? Is there really such a thing as justice? Don't we merely imagine it, as pious persons imagine a

paradise? Perhaps our understanding is not capable of recognizing justice; perhaps it lies beyond our powers of conception. But then everything one did would be so ephemeral, and everything one attained would be so senseless. There must, there must, there must be some squaring of accounts; it's now eighteen years and nine months; dear God, there must, there must, there must. . . . There must be what, Etzel? You are setting up an adamantine *must* in your sixteen-year-old rebellious soul, but by what power in heaven or on earth will it be approved? . . . He closed his eyes, and saw Joshua Cooper, with the blood running down his face from forehead to chin; like a symbol of hopelessness. A cold shudden ran down his spine; he snatched at the book, which was still open in his hand, and on the page to which he had just turned he read the following lines: "Even on the fullest glass there may still float the petal of the rose, and on the petal of the flower there is room for ten thousand angels."

What words! Like a star! He knew them, but he had never been able to understand them before; now, after all that he had experienced, they shone with a starry radiance. To the man who had written this he must go that very hour. There could be no further hesitation or delay; if there was anyone in the world who could answer the question, it was the man who wrote those words. Fever? what did fever matter? one couldn't pay any attention to that! It was four o'clock in the afternoon; it would take an hour to get to the West End; a likely time to find anyone at home. Perhaps he would be fortunate enough to find that Ghisels was in town and willing to receive him. In spite of the heaviness of his limbs and the soreness of his throat, Etzel crept out of bed, washed his face and chest, and slipping into his clothes, left the house.

6

He went up in the lift to the fourth floor of an isolated block and rang the bell at one of the two doors of a flat. After some little time a young man appeared; he had a pleasant face and horn-rimmed spectacles. He had left open the doors leading to the

room from which he had emerged, and Etzel could hear eager voices. In the little hall five or six hats and sticks were hanging up, and a woman's mantle. Ah, thought Etzel—and his heart fell into his boots—you're not in luck, brother Etzel. . . . The young man inquired what he wanted. With a shyness which he was powerless to overcome, Etzel replied that he would like to speak to Herr Ghisels—Herr Ghisels!—the "Herr" sounded so stiff and foolish that his tongue could hardly pronounce it. The young man smiled, with a smile which said: So would a good many people; and asked for his name. Etzel replied that his name was Andergast, Etzel Andergast; that he had written to Herr Melchior Ghisels about six months ago, and had received a reply from him; perhaps Herr Ghisels would remember it. This was the first time for a long while that he had used his own name; he had, of course, never intended to appear in this sacred spot with a mask over his face. But it gave him, nevertheless, a curious feeling suddenly to be himself again; not as though he were returning to something familiar, but rather as though he had put on a brand-new suit and did not feel quite comfortable in it; as though it were rather too tight. The pleasant young man wanted to know whether he had come about anything in particular. Etzel shook his head. "No, not precisely," he replied; he would be satisfied if he could just see Herr Ghisels, if he could spend half an hour with him, in the same room; that was all he wanted. (You are lying; it is not all you want, contradicted an inner voice.) The young man smiled again, and looked at this curious visitor, not without interest. "Just come in here," he said, "while I ask Herr Ghisels." Etzel entered the little hall while the young man disappeared. As his knees were trembling and he was a little dizzy, he sat down on a chair; within him all was silence; he was divided between reverent anticipation, the dread of being repulsed, and fear of the great moment. If an author (I mean one of those who, like Ghisels, bring new ideas into the world and set men's feet on new paths) could only realize what is happening in the soul of a boy whose heart he has touched, and who does not take the step of calling on him without serious internal

conflict, he would summon up all his ingenuity—and call upon his whole heart as well—that he might be prepared for such a meeting. But only a few, only the very few, are true to themselves in this respect; perhaps, too, it is beyond the capacity of human nature always to be what one is in one's hours of creation. This, perhaps, was in some degree responsible for the anxiety which Etzel was feeling, the most intellectual of anxieties: How will my image of him accord with the reality? How shall I feel when I have left this house, when I have seen him, heard his voice, listened to his words? What will he say and do; how will he talk and look, and what must happen in order that he shall remain what he is to me? The temptation not to wait for the young man's return, but simply to get up and leave the flat, grew stronger every minute; then nothing could happen; then one would have retained one's God. The waiting was so frightfully long. He listened. He heard a monotonous voice narrating. His hearing was so acute through fever and excitement that he could hear individual words through the two intervening doors. Someone was reading aloud. It was clear that the young man could not announce the inopportune visitor until the reading was over. The electric bell at the front door rang shrilly. In the room within no one seemed to hear it. The bell rang again. Etzel considered whether he should open the door, but decided that he had no right to do so. Then, through another door than that through which the young man had disappeared, a woman of thirty-eight or forty came forward. Her bearing and manner told Etzel that she was the mistress of the house. Her face showed traces of great beauty, but it looked tired and faded. Etzel had never considered that there might be "a woman" here; it surprised him and increased his uneasiness. The woman paused in surprise when she saw the young man, and asked: "Didn't the bell ring just now?"—"Yes, twice, madam," replied Etzel, feeling as though he ought to apologize for sitting there so stupidly. The woman opened the door. Outside stood another woman, still very young, bloomingly young, very pretty, with shining eyes and a fresh, insolent mouth. What followed was extraordinary.

The two women measured one another in silent hostility. The young woman outside seemed to be disagreeably affected on seeing the other before her. The impression Etzel received was that the younger woman had definitely counted on not finding her there. The mistress of the house drew herself up a little, shrugged her shoulders, and laughed, a short, cooing, contemptuous laugh, and banged the door. The brutality of the gesture, for a person of her shy, melancholy nature, had something terrifying about it. She stood there with bowed head; one end of the blue silk shawl which she wore round her shoulders had slipped off unnoticed. It was as though she had for the time being forgotten her surroundings. A grief indescribably profound portrayed itself on her features. She looked like a statue expressing the complete self-absorption of grief. Suddenly she started, and slowly returned whence she had come. She did not even glance at Etzel again. He sat huddled in his chair, feeling as though he had accidentally picked up something that belonged to somebody else. And he had an even more painful impression: that fate did not respect even this door; that here too the tempests of life were raging: that not even the noble thinker who had written: "On the fullest glass there still may float the petal of the rose, and on the petal of the flower there is room for ten thousand angels" was spared the perplexities of life; that over him too rolled the waves of passion and of sadness. Now everything was in some degree exposed to Etzel's eyes; the holy of holies had become a human dwelling; and just as one walks with less assurance over a bridge when one knows that one of its piers is decayed, even though heavy waggons may be crossing it, his mind was constrained, and the ground was unsteady beneath his feet. Meanwhile the young man reappeared and courteously asked him to come in.

7

Melchior Ghisels' house was a refuge for the mentally harassed, for struggling, striving, helpless, shipwrecked, bewildered men and women. People came to him as to a great physician; there

were days when his room was not empty from noon to midnight; people of every age, men and women, writers and artists, actors and students, emigrants and politicians, flocked to him, so that his wife and his intimate friends were often obliged to protect him from the throng of visitors. He had been in seriously bad health for several years, and was no longer equal to any exertion. These people all hung upon his every word, confided their most intimate affairs to him, expounded their conflicts of conscience and their professional anxieties, begged him to criticize their work, and engaged him in comprehensive discussions of problems of art, religion or philosophy; and there was scarcely one of them who did not in the end bow to his authoritative verdict. There were men and women among them who did not by any means confide in him, and whom he did not even like, but whose spiritual needs and financial difficulties kept him busy and preoccupied for weeks and months. Then they would disappear, and leave no trace, and as a rule he heard no more of them. This did not disappoint him, nor did he feel betrayed or cheated when a man withdrew himself from his influence, or repaid him with ingratitude; for even this enriched him. Not in the sense of experience, but by increasing his extraordinarily profound intuition of life; an intuition which made him mild and indulgent, and above all, so understanding that he was sometimes incomprehensible in his self-contradictions. He took nothing in other people lightly; not even the pretentious emptiness of the dilettante; even his scorn was conscientious, if one may say such a thing. What he himself said, however, had the ease and the lightness which arise from a perfect mastery of means; to converse with him was a delight, because it was so easy. Whatever he told one, it always seemed that he simply wanted to get it off his mind; and so he released his hearers from any obligation; by mere acceptance one seemed to be as active, as communicative, as creative, as intellectual, and as knowledgeable as himself. Everything about the man was organized and concentrated, and proceeded from a central focus, and in him that despairing void between the mind and soul, which explains why, out of the

legions of astonishingly talented persons, not one single great man emerges, simply did not exist. And so he was able to fit a meaning of his own to all the events and personalities and activities and destinies which he absorbed into his life, making it fruitful beyond the capacities of mere perception.

That Etzel, still half a boy, unripe and inexperienced, with the awakening of his awareness of life, should have felt magnetically drawn to such a man as he became increasingly conscious of the world about him, though his sense of Ghisels' personality was derived only from his books, shows that he too was possessed of a certain magnetism, whether we are to call it instinct or spiritual vitality. The same profound instinct had, of course, made him more timid and doubtful at every step that brought him nearer to the object of his reverence. The incident of the two women was now no more than an external symbol of his gnawing doubt as to whether there existed anywhere in this world a creature, however broad, however noble, from whom he could learn that which, if it could not be learned and established, made life a worthless thing.

He entered a large room which contained some fine old furniture, and found himself at once in the presence of Melchior Ghisels, a man of about fifty, of more than average height, with a well-proportioned body, movements and gestures which were naturally free and graceful, a clean-shaven face, a strong, energetically curved nose, and deep-set eyes which had a quiet, penetrating, pondering, kindly expression. His mouth was small and incomparably expressive; his lips, when silent, were tightly, almost painfully compressed, whereas when he spoke they looked as though Nature—which so often exaggerates the most necessary organs—had created them to form words, rare and significant words, peculiar to this mouth only. The effect of the fleshy, protruding ears on this noble head was bizarre and almost unnatural; but just as the mouth was made for speaking, so these ears, like big red sea-shells, seemed to be made for good and accurate and abundant hearing.

Asked to take a chair, Etzel seated himself silently and modestly

a little outside the circle of the other visitors. Of these people, at whom he glanced unconcernedly, almost all pleased him; not one was callous or vulgar. There were four young men, a white-haired old gentleman, and a young girl, and she too, curiously enough, had white hair. Ghisels had contented himself with mentioning the name of the new arrival; he omitted all other ceremony. From time to time he glanced at Etzel, searchingly and with some surprise, slightly raising his black bushy eyebrows. Etzel had interrupted a conversation. He heard only Melchior Ghisels' voice. He did not hear what the others were saying, nor did he understand the meaning of Ghisels' words; he only had a vague impression of refinement, of an effortless flow of words, of a sure beauty of form; he listened only to the words, listened with such thirsty intensity that when the voice ceased he started imperceptibly, and waited with eager attention until it began again, covering all the other voices as though with shadowy wings. It was a singular joy, a singular release. During the weeks of confused conversation with Warschauer-Waremme he had unconsciously become accustomed to the latter's voice, as one becomes accustomed to a daily torture; in the end it had become the only voice he ever heard, for he had scarcely spoken with anyone else; he had forgotten what a voice that speaks from the soul sounds like; what sincerity, what a quiet rhythm it has. It was the difference between the sound of a gold piece and that of a leaden coin when one drops them on a stone to test their genuineness.

"Are you not well?" asked Ghisels suddenly, turning to Etzel. "You look very white. Perhaps I can offer you some refreshment? If you would like anything, just tell me." Etzel shook his head and thanked him; his words tumbled over one another; he smiled; the smile seemed to please Ghisels, for the writer laid a hand for a moment on his shoulder. Etzel understood the touch to mean that he was to have patience, that he would not be sent away until he had been heard. As a matter of fact, the gathering broke up soon after this; the white-haired girl and the young man with the horn-rimmed spectacles remained a few minutes longer,

and Ghisels talked to them for a little in a jesting tone. When they had gone the mistress of the house came in and gently persuaded Ghisels to lie down on the sofa. He looked really very tired; his wife waited until he was lying down; then she drew a camel-hair rug over his legs and asked him whether she should open the window. She had a curious way of speaking; she hardly opened her lips or parted her teeth; there was a strange tenseness about her; she seemed accustomed to suffering; even her walk and her glance were eloquent of it. Etzel once more was conscious of an impression of vague melancholy, and of the shifting of the ground beneath his feet. "I hope I am not disturbing you?" he stammered. "Don't worry about that," replied Ghisels; and to his wife: "Yes, dearest, open the window; it is such a beautiful evening." The woman opened the window and silently left the room.

"Just look," said Ghisels, pointing to the western sky. Etzel looked. As though this house were the first or the last of the whole city, the tops of the pines beneath the window stretched away to the horizon like an unbroken carpet of green. Over this hung a claret-coloured sky, the whole of which was broken at regular intervals by streaks of gold and purple cloud, like incandescent girders. While Etzel was trying, with adamant concentration, to collect his thoughts, and hesitating how to express them, Ghisels turned his eyes toward this display of tragic and magnificent colour.

In a few words Etzel touched on his relation to Ghisels' work. In order that he might not seem presumptuous, he merely hinted that his attitude toward the principal problems of life had been decisively influenced by Ghisels' writings. But he had not been content with reflection; he had gone a step farther. This was the meaning which he thought he had discovered in Ghisels' writings; that one must go a step farther. (Melchior Ghisels became noticeably more attentive.) The matter was this: His father was a high legal official. Between his father and himself a secret antagonism had developed; during the last year it had become acute. He had felt less and less in harmony with his father's general

point of view, his interpretation of life, and his petrified conception of the world; although in other respects his father was a man of great ability. Yes, he was a remarkable character, incorruptible and upright, and a man of culture. Of course he, Etzel, had from his earliest childhood heard a great deal about his father's public activities. Some of the things he heard were bad; often very bad. These things gradually made him intolerably uneasy. Everything seemed to be turned topsy-turvy; and the whole of his life at home, together with all the rest. His father's attitude toward the law, and toward justice, was dominated by something which he could only describe by the word "dessicated". A dead tradition. A law without a soul. (He was suddenly speaking fluently and with fervour.) There had been disputes; these disputes had led to a break; he had fled to his relatives; he had been obliged to free himself from the oppression of a relationship in which there was no longer any sincerity; so long as he ate his father's bread he was, so to speak, in his father's service; for the present he needed only the opportunity to collect himself, to come to his senses and look about him. One read and one heard so much that was puzzling and tormenting; as for law and justice, they gave him the impression of a spiritual plague, of a general darkening of the light; and if one could not see the matter clearly, in its relation to oneself and the world, it was simply impossible for a young man to find any basis of existence; and he had therefore decided to ask Herr Ghisels for his advice and opinion.

Singular boy! Even here, in the presence of one who was in a certain sense his master, he was silent as to the real, the fateful facts, just as he had concealed them from Camill Raff and Robert Thielemann. And just as he had employed his relations to his mother as a screen in his conversation with Thielemann, so he now used his relations to his father. Was it a delicate sense of shame before "action", which in highly gifted natures often assumes a defensive form, or was it the fear that someone might tie his hands? Or did he doubt himself, because of the fantastic colour which his venture might wear in the eyes of an "experi-

enced" person? (Though he had reached the point where he no longer attached the slightest importance to the experience of the experienced, and was convinced that a Melchior Ghisels could never make himself their advocate—he, who had called experience a monument over a grave.) Or was he silent from a kind of superstition, as though his success depended on his silence; or because of the magic spell of the constantly recurring vision of the convict in the penitentiary? Whether his reticence was due to one or to all of these causes, it was stronger than his will and his intention, stronger than the boundless confidence which he felt in Melchior Ghisels.

The latter had listened to him with growing interest. "You are very young?" he inquired; for Etzel seemed to him even younger than he was. "I shall soon be seventeen," replied Etzel. Ghisels nodded. "A great many of your contemporaries are living to-day by borrowing from their own future," he said, resting the back of his head upon his folded hands. "I am the last person to criticize that. We are all doing so nowadays, to a shocking extent. But borrowing from the future has perils which one cannot foresee. It always reminds me rather of the Indian child-marriages. Those children are wrecks at twenty." He paused, and continued, hesitatingly. "You seem to me to be out of breath after some very critical experience. . . ." Etzel flushed scarlet. Good heavens, he thought, startled and astonished, he really can see into one! But Ghisels made a gesture as though to beg the boy not to regard his remark as importunate or coercive. "Just forget that; pay no attention to it, as though it had never been said. I see there is something there which must be respected. What brings you to me is nothing new to me, unfortunately. It is a crisis which has gone beyond making harmless circles in a pool. A few years ago one could still console oneself with the thought that it was just this or that isolated case; one could adjust oneself to these cases—one can deal with individuals—but to-day we are threatened with the collapse of the whole structure which we have been building up for two thousand years. There is a profound and morbid lust of destruction, even

in the most sensitive persons. If this cannot be stopped—and I am afraid it is already too late—it must lead, within the next fifty years, to a frightful collapse, far worse than any wars or revolutions that we have seen hitherto. Curiously enough, the subversive spirit often has its origin with those who suffer from the illusion that they are called upon to safeguard what we call our most sacred possessions. Apparently this is so in the matter of your dispute with your father. I have often discussed the subject with my friends. Most of them put the blame on politics—that is, what we call politics to-day—a corroding acid which devours all human relationships. I have seen a good deal of it. I have another comparison for it: furnace in which the heart of our youth is being burned to cinders.”

Etzel, with his hands pressed between his knees, leaned forward and replied eagerly: “I understand; you are speaking less of politics than of the social discipline in general. . . .” Ghisels smiled. “Yes, or of the false or defective discipline which rests upon force. . . .”—“Of course, I have always felt that, and that is why I could never adjust myself. They always try to get at one’s point of view. But after all, even those who have the desirable point of view may behave contemptibly. I don’t know whether I can really say ‘we’. I don’t much want to do so. I once saw a modern play in which a gymnasium student, on the stage, kept on saying *we* all the evening: *we* demand this, *we* think that, *we* are taking this or that course. . . . It was quite ludicrous. . . .”

“Yes,” replied Ghisels with good-humoured sarcasm, “people have got into a way of talking as though to be twenty was the most meritorious of human achievements. An intoxication, a *hubris*, of which we middle-aged folk are not wholly guiltless. And yet there is a spirit of unity there, if only because there is a general despair. But you were going to say something more. . . .”—“No, no, only what you have just said,” replied Etzel, who felt literally intoxicated; in his animation he flushed as pink as a rose, and was no longer conscious of fever or pain. “I only wanted to say just that. We must despair if justice is dead. Why,

everything depends on justice, doesn't it? One reads in old books that soldiers have wept when the colours of their regiment were dishonoured. What shall we do if the only flag to which we still look up is dishonoured day after day, and, moreover, by the standard-bearers themselves? Justice, it seems to me, is the beating heart of the world. Is that so, or isn't it?"—"It is so, my dear fellow," said Ghisels in corroboration. "Justice and love were originally sisters. In our civilization they are no longer even distant relatives. One might offer many explanations, without explaining anything. We no longer have a people; I mean, a people that is the body of the nation; so that what we call democracy is based on an amorphous mass; it can't organize and uplift itself intelligently, and it stifles all ideality. Perhaps we need a Cæsar. But where is he to come from? And we have reason to dread the chaos which alone would engender him. What the best people do at the best is to furnish commentaries on an earthquake. As for the rest . . . poof!" He blew across the back of his hand as though blowing away a feather.—"There is just one thing that I should like to say to you," he continued; "just think about it a little; perhaps it will help you on a step or two, for we can only move forward very, very slowly, and step by step; between each step and the next there are all the weaknesses, all the omissions, all the delusions, even the noble delusions, of which we are guilty. It is not a means of salvation, it is not a tremendous truth that I have in mind; but perhaps, as I have said, it will serve as a hint, a useful suggestion. . . . What I mean is this: good and evil are determined not in mutual intercourse, but solely in a man's relations to himself. Do you understand?"—"Yes, I understand," said Etzel, dropping his eyes. "But please don't think me stupid. . . . I must say this . . . here is an example . . . if my friend, or my friend's father . . . or anyone closely related to me . . . or for that matter even someone who is not closely related to me . . . if he is imprisoned unjustly, and I . . . what am I to do . . . how does my relation to myself help me in such a case? Surely there is only one thing that I can and must demand: right, justice! Am I to leave him

in torment? Am I to forget about him? Am I to say, how does it concern me? Because . . . what *is* justice if I don't see it through, I, myself, Etzel Andergast . . . ?”

He had involuntarily risen to his feet and was gazing into Ghisels' face as though it were of him that he was demanding right and justice, demanding it there and then. Ghisels too had risen from his recumbent posture to a sitting one. For a time he steadily returned the boy's glance; then he looked at the fading sky, and said gently, as he stretched out his arms: "I have nothing to reply to that, except. . . . Forgive me; I am only a feeble creature." For a moment he looked as infinitely tormented as the Christ Crucified of Matthias Grünewald. Etzel bowed his head as under a blow. He at once understood the nobility of the reply, and the tremendous resignation which it expressed. And now, in his heart, he understood something else, and his heart grew heavy: the ten thousand angels on the rose-petal were a metaphor, a poem, a mysterious and beautiful symbol, nothing more; no, alas, nothing more!

The door of the adjoining room opened, and there, a black figure in the lighted rectangle, the mistress of the house appeared, saying in her broken, toneless voice: "You must come to dinner now, Ghisels." Melchior Ghisels rose painfully, as only the suffering move; he took Etzel's hand and pressed it with almost painful fervour. Etzel was very near kissing the hand that held his own. In the street below a taxicab was passing: he signalled to it, and fell into it, half fainting, as it stopped in front of the house.

CHAPTER XII

I

WHEN Herr von Andergast, after a sleepless night (for which perhaps only the miserable bed at the inn was responsible, although to the Spartan mind of the attorney-general such discomforts were not worth regarding) entered the cell at seven o'clock in the morning, Maurizius was sitting at the table, reading. The convict laid his book aside, stood up, and waited with a peculiar rigidity as the warder closed the door again, not without an expression of inquisitive surprise on his bloated, alcoholic face.

"Good morning," said Herr von Andergast, in an amiable tone, whose artificiality, however, could not deceive the prisoner's ear. "Good morning," was the stiff and punctual reply.—"Have you had a fair night's rest?"—Maurizius bowed.—"May I ask what you are reading?" Herr von Andergast picked up the book; it was the chronicle of the city of Rothenburg, by Sebastian Dehner.—"Ah, does that interest you? A superfluous question, since you are reading it."—"One gets a good idea of how the people lived; or rather, how they were prevented from living."—"H'm, I don't know. The people in those days lived more vigorously than to-day."—"More patiently, at any rate. When their houses were plundered and their cattle killed they complained to the Kaiser, and if the Kaiser did not help them they went on pilgrimages of intercession. The people were always very patient; they are so even to-day. All government is based on that; on the patience of the people; that is how governments manage to muddle along." Herr von Andergast wrinkled his forehead. "You are bitter," he said, with an obvious resolve to be indulgent; "but don't let us waste our valuable time in polemics. It was your intention. . . . I hope you have not changed your mind. You see, I have acted upon your . . . your suggestion, and have placed myself at your disposal for the day." The old rigidity came over Maurizius. His eyes were fixed as he answered: "I shall do what I promised." He leaned against the wall. Herr

von Andergast drew the chair towards the window and sat down. With a cordial wave of the hand he suggested that Maurizius too should sit down; it was the gesture which he had made at the beginning of their conversation on the previous day. But Maurizius did not appear to notice it. He remained standing against the wall. His eyes were half closed; his small teeth gnawed at the beautifully-curved upper lip; he brushed his forehead once or twice with a slender, nervous hand, and began to speak in a low voice, which fell so low at times that it could be heard only with an effort.

2

He knew the very day on which he had seen Anna for the first time. It was a Monday, the nineteenth of September, 1904. "I had just come home from the university; in the hall there was hanging a lady's fur-lined cloak, from which there came a delicate scent of verbena . . . the scent still comes back to me sometimes in my dreams." (He hesitated; as though to sniff that imagined scent; or so it seemed to Herr von Andergast. All the earlier part of his narrative was interrupted by frequent hesitations and pauses, by obvious attempts to recollect, almost to reach back into the past, as a man may plunge his arm into water, in order to recover, with anxious effort, some sunken object. It is, of course, impossible to reproduce these pauses, these hesitations.) When he entered the room the sisters were seated facing one another. His wife said, smiling: "This is Anna." He could not conceal his surprise. He had heard much about Anna's beauty; his expectations in this respect were high, and he was prepared for her arrival; nevertheless, the sight of the girl astonished him. She was more beautiful than he had expected. In any case, she was different from what he had anticipated.

Her presence was a restraint. Above all, the idea of her living in the same house was displeasing. Apart from the disturbance to one's peace and comfort which a guest in the house entailed, there was something in this girl of eighteen or nineteen which compelled one's constant attention. What it was one could not

at first define; one was merely aware of it. In the course of the next few days he noticed, and could not refrain from observing to his wife, that Anna was unamiable in her manner. He particularized various occasions when she had annoyed him by her arrogant behaviour. It even seemed as though she sought such occasions. "She treats me as though I had been stealing the silver," he complained to his wife. Elli tried to excuse her sister. She regarded herself as the girl's protector. But it did not escape Maurizius that the two did not understand one another. Elli admired Anna's beauty, which was, indeed, universally admired; she tried to help and advise her, for Anna was worried about her financial affairs; she was in a difficult position, so that Elli was obliged to receive her; but a difference of twenty years cannot be bridged over; a sister cannot demand submission, nor was Anna in the least inclined to be submissive. Maurizius remained in the background, but he kept his eyes open. He took a certain pleasure in criticizing things which he disliked in his sister-in-law. Her habit of going to confession every Sunday was peculiarly annoying to him. Once, when he was exasperated into making a sarcastic remark on the subject, she retorted that an atheist should not discuss a sacrament. That evening he read aloud to her and Elli a short essay on Dürer's landscapes, which he had just finished. The work seemed to make an impression on Anna. He asked her whether she called the man who had written it an atheist, and if so, what was an atheist? She was silent; she seemed to be reflecting. She had always an enigmatical smile on her lips. When one saw a good deal of her it began to seem an unpleasant, stereotyped smile. It was a ready reply to all manner of things: compliments, advice, favours, contradictions and demands. It wavered between embarrassment and mockery. Maurizius gave a considerable time to the analysis of this smile. He called it a specifically virginal smile, stubborn and disrespectful. There is, he continued, a peculiar kind of assurance which one finds and tolerates only in girls of eighteen. If one could have taken the smile from her lips, like the label from a box, one would perhaps have uncovered a blemish; a

flaw in the enamel, he called it, thoughtfully. But don't let us waste any more time on it. . . . (He was evidently taking pains to make the figure of Anna—in which Herr von Andergast could not so far detect anything at all captivating—quite clear to his hearer, and he mentioned a characteristic incident.) One morning Elli said to him: "Just think, Anna doesn't want to go on living with us."—"Ah, we are probably not distinguished enough," he replied; "though, after all, old Jahn, in Cologne, did not live in a palace."—"That's not it," replied Elli, with embarrassment. "She doesn't like having her room next to our bedroom. Already, because she expressly asked me to, I have put the wardrobe against her door and have had the space between stuffed with mattresses; but that's not enough; it is unpleasant to her." Maurizius exclaimed that such prudery was revolting. Elli tried to appease him; Anna had grown up in a convent; one must bear that in mind, and overlook her extravagances. Yes, it was her Catholicism, he admitted contemptuously; and, speaking as a man of the world, he uttered the usual commonplaces about a corrupt imagination at work behind demurely lowered eyes. But Anna's eyes were not demurely lowered. On the contrary, her glance took in men and things with inconsiderate frankness ("and this with the smile which I have mentioned"), as though the most intimate particulars were known to her. One simply could not understand the girl. She did not fit in anywhere; she did not fit into the bourgeois world, nor yet into the great world; nor into the Bohemian set, and certainly not into the half-world. She was not amusing; she had no conversation; she had not read much; she did not cut any figure in society. She was merely beautiful. One grew tired of her beauty. It became a bore. And yet, and yet . . . she was like a deep well . . . profound and unfathomable. One of her most unsociable characteristics was that she would not tolerate any sort of risky story. This abhorrence, which she frankly acknowledged, led one day to an open quarrel with Elli, and later on to a dispute with himself. Elli had invited a few people to dinner, among them a Herr von Buchenau, who later became one of Waremmé's intimates; a

wealthy sportsman and collector, no longer a young man, very intellectual, very cynical, and popular as a teller of risky anecdotes. He was not backward with them on the evening in question; the stories became more and more indecent; and as he was uttering a scarcely veiled obscenity (he was accustomed to hardened listeners, and stopped at nothing) Anna suddenly got up, as though she had only just understood the whole conversation, and casting such a glance at the amazed Buchenau that his words stuck in his throat, she left the room, and did not return. Next day Elli took her to task, telling her that grown people did not pass their time in relating pious anecdotes; that she would not allow her guests to be affronted, and so forth; and finally she appealed to Leonhart for his opinion. Anna simply gazed on the floor with her mysteriously limpid eyes; it seemed as though she was seeking Maurizius's face, but her gaze rose no higher than his knees; and at the same time she smiled, a curious, sleepy smile. He refrained from saying anything; the scene was distasteful to him; for the first time he could not find that his sister-in-law was in the wrong. Elli called over her shoulder to her sister: "I believe you are so absorbed in yourself that you no longer realize when you are offending other people." To which Anna replied: "Oh, no, how can you?" "I remember," said Maurizius, "that the words penetrated me through and through. They sounded—I can still remember their very tone—as though a blind person were overcome with amazement because he was accused of squinting. . . . You may be surprised that I can repeat all this so precisely; I can vouch for it that not a word has been altered or invented. Every syllable is engraved on my brain; I could draw every expression; it is only that the sequence of things is sometimes confused; otherwise it is all as though it had been yesterday."

He moved a few steps away from the wall, but returned immediately, as though to an invisible sentry-box which protected him from some danger known to himself alone. Herr von Andergast, with his hands folded over his crossed knees, his head slightly turned towards the window, was disturbed by the

dull sound of hammering which rose from the prison yard, and compelled him to redouble his attention, in order not to lose anything that the dull voice by the wall was saying. In one respect these events were familiar to him; at least, they awakened familiar associations; in another they were entirely new. It was almost as though one were to read a book whose contents had hitherto been known to one only from an exhaustive description, in the press, perhaps, or in a book about the book. One may convince oneself in this manner, not without a certain terror, that even the most accurate accounts have hardly any resemblance to the life in the book itself, the life of experience and its direct precipitate. Curiously enough, he noted that this experience oppressed him, and increased the painful intellectual uncertainty and the vacillating judgment from which he had been suffering for several days.

3

Maurizius, with the same dull, fixed glance, now began to speak of his first confidential conversation with his young sister-in-law. He seemed to feel that what was discussed between him and Anna on this occasion was not of any great importance. It was only the direction in which it led that was important. Every least incident naturally became a link in this chain. That she had heard of his past as a seducer and adventurer was evident. It did not occur to him to regret it or to repent of it. According to the views which he held at that time, this reputation would serve to make a man interesting rather than contemptible. She had not much faith in his improvement by his marriage with Elli; she regarded him as still unreliable. Well, no one had appointed her as a judge of his actions; her morality was not his; one would try to get on without her approval and sympathy. After all, who was she? An exacting young person who was living on the credit arising from her possession of a very beautiful face. Nevertheless, her evident contempt was galling to him. He could not reconcile himself to it; it robbed him of his sleep; it embittered his leisure hours; always he saw

the slightly knitted brows over the clear, cool brown eyes. Of all this, as we have said, he gave a somewhat cursory account. What happened was just what had happened in a thousand similar cases. Just as he, up to a certain point in his life—so he stated—had lived the average life of the average man. Suddenly, at a certain point, “fate” takes hold of one. . . . It came rolling towards him like a tremendous stone ball. Three minutes earlier one had not so much as an inkling of this monstrous “fate.” (“Don’t you think,” he asked, as one who expects no answer, “that our so-called ‘fate’ generally comes into existence outside ourselves, in a horribly subtle manner, and is in certain respects outside us? One goes dancing along like an idiot, and it is only when one no longer knows which way to turn that one realizes with terror: ‘Oh, this is *fate*; this is what has befallen me’.”) He felt as though he had been struck in the face when, during the course of their conversation, Anna said to him: “Of course, you have sold yourself.” At first he stood as though struck dumb; he felt that he was insulted and misunderstood. She seemed to regret the ugly words; when he defended himself, with all his powers of persuasion, against the shameful reproach, she listened to him not without emotion. When she was leaving she gave him her hand. Her silence was half an entreaty, half an assurance. Had he convinced her? He was not certain. The whole affair had made him feel uneasy. He realized, with despair, and with the suddenness of a flash of lightning, that she was right. An awakening pregnant with consequences. From that moment onward he was forced to cloak one lie with another, to heap lie upon lie until they were like to choke him. The affair of the anonymous letter which he had written to himself was the beginning of the path to the abyss. (Here once again he digressed into one of his gloomy meditations, expounding the difference between a verbal lie and an acted one; it was the same difference which might exist between a conditionally harmless tubercle and an infected organism.) If a man married an unloved woman a curse rested on the marriage from which he could never escape; it led inevitably to self-destruction; that is, if, as in this case, it

entailed the destruction of the other party to the marriage. The more exalted the pretexts for the union, the more hopeless the event would prove. He had thought that he was acting with unusual wisdom when he made Elli his wife, and he had not even the most superficial knowledge of her personality. If his marriage was a matter of shrewd calculation, then it was a deliberate piece of scoundrelism, no matter what supposedly noble aims he had had in view. If it was undertaken lightly and in a spirit of frivolous fatalism, he had even less reason to be surprised at the suffering which it had brought upon him. No, there was nothing to be surprised at. If a man gives himself, but secretly withholds his own soul from the gift, while he accepts the soul of another as though it were a fair exchange, he is committing a crime, perhaps the greatest of all crimes. His guilt is not one iota less egregious because he excuses himself by saying: I did not know. That's just the point: one must know. Here above all the dictum "ignorance of the law does not protect the offender from punishment" holds good. The law; what law? The law within oneself. That law one must know. . . .

For a minute he was wholly self-absorbed. While Herr von Andergast was considering the moral self-laceration of the convict with some remnant of sober distrust (and what an abysmal meaning the word *convict* suddenly assumed!) the latter resumed his narrative. "A few days after this conversation with Anna the letter from the Swiss lawyer came, telling me of the birth of my daughter Hildegard, and of the demands which my former mistress was making on me." He knew that she was desperately ill; he knew that she lacked the bare necessities of life. He found himself in a morass of difficulties, and could see no way out. His first thought was: Anna. He confessed that, apart from his perplexity, there was an irresistible, even a morbid fascination in the thought of involving Anna in this affair. He was now on fairly good terms with her; she had told him all sorts of things about her life; nothing of importance, of course, nothing which would allow him to see anything of her inner self; in that respect she was completely inaccessible. But she had

discussed plans for the future with him; she was even beginning to take an interest in his work, astonishing him at times by the unerring aim of some critical remark; and all this encouraged him to take a step which he did not consider beforehand; he simply risked it, as one risks a stake at roulette. She listened to him; she said nothing; she left the house, and he was more uneasy than ever; had he once more forfeited her respect and sympathy? Two hours later she telephoned, asking him to meet her on the promenade; she declared that she was ready to go to Switzerland to get the child, and to take it to the home of her friend, Mrs. Caspot, near London. She gave him no time to ask questions, to inquire as to details; she had decided that this was to be done; he was merely to provide the money for the journey, and for the wages of the nurse who was to accompany her. He was dumbfounded. He would never have believed her capable of such enterprise. Under her cloak of coldness, under her proud, suspicious *noli me tangere* were buried maternal instincts and powers of compassion; perhaps, too, she was glad of the opportunity to make him forget the wrong she had done him.—Sheer imagination. She wanted to get away, that was all. The journey to Switzerland and England, he might as well say at once, were attempts at escape. Only attempts, of course, yet a means of gaining time while she hoped for some helping chance. Afterwards, it was true, she had conceived an extraordinary passion for the child Hildegard; during the worst of the black times which followed she never failed in her care for the child, as though that were something for her to hold on to, a last neutral refuge, free from fever and torment; but at the time of her decision she was simply driven by fear. The change did not escape him. She was distraught; she laughed when there was nothing to laugh at; in the midst of her preparations for her journey—the train was leaving in half an hour—she remembered that she had left her wrist-watch in the university library; and she wept, and became almost hysterical. He calmed her with the greatest difficulty, and implored her to tell him why she was so distressed; she was evasive, and seemed to be frightened;

at last, as though she were making a tremendous confession, she said it was due to her "attacks". She had been free from them for a year; now, from the constant pressure in her brain, she was afraid that they were going to begin again. This was true and untrue. He was to become familiar with these "attacks"; but she was not so much afraid of these; there was something else which was oppressing her soul, but of that she did not speak; she could not bring herself to do so. It was a long time before he learned what it was, and when he did know he could no longer fight against it; he was already in the fiery furnace. "At that time I could still perhaps have struggled. If someone had said to me: 'If you love life, go away with her, go into hiding with her; never again show yourself in your own country, your own city, your own home; disappear, be dead to the world which you have known hitherto'—perhaps I should have done it. For at that time she was already to me . . . at that time she . . . dear God in heaven, she . . . no, there are no words for that. Perhaps I could have persuaded her to it; perhaps, who knows?—but that did not happen, because such things never do happen; such promptings would save one from life, and death too. But life has to be lived, that's the trouble. . . ." He broke off, walked over to the table, took up the stone-ware jug, and poured out a glass of water, which he drank greedily. With his two arms resting on the table and his head bowed, he stood for a while in silence.

"Well . . . Waremme," said Herr von Andergast quietly.

"Yes, Waremme."

4

After a pause it was Herr von Andergast who spoke. (He must have feared that Maurizius, for some reason, perhaps because his emotion was too great, or perhaps because the scenes which he was describing had faded from his memory, was losing the desire to make further revelations, and he hoped to help him over his involuntary silence by a brisk and sympathetic question.) "Well," he asked, "he had unexpectedly appeared on the scene

of action, if I understand you correctly?"—"You understand me correctly."—"And Anna Jahn already knew this when you told her of the affair with the child?"—"Yes, she already knew then that he had traced her."—"What—traced her? So he had, as it were, pursued her?"—"If he was not pursuing her he was nevertheless looking for her. That she was staying with us was easily learned."—"Of course. But what reason had she to hide from him, or even to fear him?" Maurizious was silent. Herr von Andergast continued: "Very well. I will assume that she had a reason, the very best of reasons, I will assume that, although I have no conception of what the reason could be; why then did she not seize the opportunity which you offered her? Why did she come back? She could easily have formed some plausible excuse for remaining abroad. She need only have written to say, for example, that the child was ill, or that Mrs. Caspot was away, or unreliable. You surely would not have objected if she had postponed her return indefinitely. In that way she could have gained time, any amount of time, and in the most inconspicuous fashion."—"Very ingenious. But she couldn't do that."—"Why not?"—"Because, because . . . she was due to return; she was in his power." Herr von Andergast looked incredulous. "In his power? Due to return? Oh, come, now! That sort of thing happens only in melodramas. There was one that was making something of a sensation at the time; you may perhaps remember it; *Trilby* was the name. Dismal rubbish; there was a certain Svengali in it, just such a wizard. Those are simply wild romances, you know. I, at all events, have never been able to convince myself that such things happen in real life. In his power . . . explain yourself more clearly!" Maurizious shook his head, without looking up. "One can't explain anything in such a case. Wild romances? Perhaps. Yes, I saw the play *Trilby* once. In such rubbish you will often find much that is true of its period."—"How did you get to know Waremmé? Not through the Jahn woman, so far as I can judge from the records. . . ."—"No, not through Anna. A few days before her return I met Herr von Buchenau in the street; he stopped me,

and said: 'Dr. Maurizius, you must come and have tea with us to-day; you'll meet a fellow—I tell you—such an experience as you've never had; a polyglot, a new Winkelmann, a poet, the sort of fellow that exists by the grace of God.' Those were his very words. Since I knew that Buchenau was a sceptic, as cold as a fish, whom no one had ever seen enthusiastic, I felt curious, and I went. And it really was an experience such as I had never known."—"At that time you knew nothing of his relation to the Jahn woman?"—"No. The next Sunday—it was the twenty-seventh of November—I saw him with Anna on the parade. He greeted me very cordially; they both stopped, and I walked on with them."—"Was it from that time onwards that you three began to associate as friends?"—"Yes."—"So the Jahn woman's original apprehension—to use an unobjectionable term—must gradually have been allayed? It was perhaps merely a caprice, a touch of hysteria?"—"Oh, God!" murmured Maurizius. Herr von Andergast looked at him with strained attention. Maurizius thrust his forefinger into his collar as though he could not breathe.—"Or had you the impression that something . . . something decisive had taken place between them?"—"Of course, replied Maurizius, in a lifeless voice. "Of course. Something terribly decisive." He was still leaning heavily on the table. Herr von Andergast waited. Strangely enough, he felt his heart beating fast. "Something," continued Maurizius. "At least. . . ." Suddenly his voice became cold and firm. "She had been raped by him." Herr von Andergast sprang to his feet. "Now, listen to me, man," he exclaimed, for the first time losing his self-control, "that . . . that is crazy . . . you have imagined that. . . ." "She had been raped by him, at seventeen," said Maurizius stonily, gripping the table so convulsively that his knuckles turned white.

From the court below there sounded a scolding order. The hammering, which had ceased during the last half-hour, began again. Under the pale-blue morning sky a flight of swallows flashed past. Herr von Andergast sat down again. He was seeking for words. "I think this must be a case," he said, hesitatingly,

"of one of the usual errors in terminology. Experience shows that rape, or violation, is extremely rare. The subsequent psychological condition of the victim admits, as a rule, of a delusion as to what has occurred which would justify an accusation." This legal digression drew a wan smile from Maurizius. "You are mistaken," he replied, "it was the flagrant crime." Then, with a sigh, "It is too curious, the whole thing. . . ."—"Why curious; what do you mean by that?"—"I mean this: the documents in the case must be about as voluminous as a history in several volumes, and the man who is the responsible editor, so to speak, is constantly forced to admit his ignorance of all but the most superficial facts. After all, that is your position; you can't deny it. Forgive me; I don't wish to offend you; but perhaps you can deduce for yourself what the legal proceedings really amount to. The balance of justice—my God—it is not a sensitive pointer, but a coarse lever, which operates only if one throws a hundredweight into the pan. Forgive me; the comparison just occurred to me." Herr von Andergast decided to ignore this outburst. "It is simply that I don't understand how you could have known," he said; "that the woman herself should have . . . one can hardly assume that; one needs no special knowledge of this difficult character to realize that. . . . Perhaps there were others who knew? Perhaps later on, after the trial was over, perhaps someone tried to make you believe this monstrous story in order . . . in order to dissuade you from certain hesitations. What? Just recollect a little." Maurizius shook his head; again the tired smile showed itself. "I heard it from Waremmé himself," he said. Herr von Andergast started. "Wha—at? From Waremmé himself? In that case you are speaking of the very last phase of the story, and the confession was intended to mean: you are not really losing so much after all; the statue was dragged through the mud long ago. . . ."—"You have guessed wrong. It was not a confession."—"What then?"—"I did not learn it right at the end, but in the second month of our acquaintance, at the beginning of January."—"Then I simply don't understand," said Herr von Andergast.

Maurizius considered him with a curiously malicious glance. "That I am quite willing to believe," he said, and, taking up the water-jug, he poured himself another glass, and emptied it at a draught.

"One can't make much of it all unless one takes into account the influence which Waremmé had over me at that time," he continued; and going over to the iron bedstead, he dropped down on the foot of the bed with evident signs of exhaustion. "It was an absolute possession. I saw with his eyes; I spoke with his words; my judgment was his; I carried myself like him; I copied him in everything. My culture, compared to his, was a mere heap of odds and ends. I had simply dabbled and collected, or had learned things in order to earn my bread. Compared with him, any man made but a poor showing. People were on their knees before him. So long as one was in the same room with him, one was completely dazzled, utterly defenceless. To such intellectual superiority one involuntarily ascribes a supremacy of moral judgment. I don't know why this should be, but it is so. For people who have built up their lives on a basis of culture and learning, morality is merely a prominence on the body of the intellectual sun, if I may so express myself. At that time this was emphatically the case. That is why we young men lived in such . . . such an airless space, such a caricature of the infinite. Only much later, only since living in this place, did I come to see this clearly. In Waremmé I saw, or I thought I saw, where one could get if one . . . well, I was going to say, if one was anybody; but he never made one feel that one was so insignificant; such a gambling, cheating, ambitious nonentity. He did not humiliate you; he was too good a comrade for that, for all his brilliance and impetuosity; he would order caviare and champagne, or recite a poem, or lavish ideas on you, with the same infectious passion; he was inexhaustible. One could spend night after night in his society and never be weary; there was no talk of sleep. The man was incomprehensible; I am convinced that such a man appears only once in a hundred years, just as a Kepler or a Schiller does; and I am also con-

vinced that he was the devil. Yes, simply the devil. No one could have a more valid reason than I for this conviction. Evil, you know, real evil, is extremely rare in this world; rarer than a Kepler or a Schiller; much rarer. . . . Well, I don't want to bore you. You will say that this is mystical nonsense; the devil has been the final excuse of the damned for long enough. At the time of which I am speaking Geheimrat Bringsmann was still alive; the literary historian, a man whom we all revered; the best society met at his house, every Friday, and one could spend a very instructive and delightful evening there. The Geheimrat was a great admirer of Waremme; he couldn't make enough of him. On the first Friday of the New Year—it was Twelfth-night—there was an unusually large gathering there, and Waremme had promised the Geheimrat to read aloud the Gorgias of Plato, of which he had just completed a translation. Almost all the professors and their wives were there; it was a distinguished audience. When I entered the large drawing-room with Elli and Anna the reading had already begun, and all the chairs were occupied. Of the reading itself there is not much to be said, except that I noticed that when we came in Waremme stopped for a few moments, and gave us an angry glance; evidently because we were late. He was unusually pedantic about such things; that is to say, in those days I put it down to pedantry and the desire of domination; but there was also a tremendous amount of vanity at work, and if one hurt this vanity one always had cause to regret it afterwards. I don't remember whether my wife or Anna was at fault in regard to this delay; Anna, at all events, was so nervous about it that she stepped on the hem of her skirt going upstairs, thus causing a further delay, because she was obliged to pin up the hem. She turned deathly pale with excitement, and her hands trembled. Waremme was overwhelmed with praise and applause; everybody crowded round him; he seemed greatly elated, and was even more talkative and stimulating than usual. I noticed, however, that he sedulously ignored me as well as Anna—with Elli he was never on good terms—and I thought 'That is

carrying one's revenge for an insignificant slight rather too far.' Among the guests was a Heidelberg professor who had recently published a work about the legendary material in Shakespeare. Waremme knew the book, and on reading it he had been annoyed by certain unintelligent opinions. We had discussed the matter only a few days before; he had been especially irritated by some disparaging remarks about *Measure for Measure*, for he had a particularly high opinion of that play. He did not allow this opportunity of a discussion with the author to escape him, and finally he pressed him so hard that the poor man had nothing further to say, and would probably have been glad to beg for mercy. The debate had aroused general attention; everybody else had stopped talking. Intoxicated by his success, by our glances of admiration, and by a secret purpose which I only half realized later on, he delighted the gathering with one of his famous *tours de force*. After a brief and delightful introduction, he recited from memory the whole of the latter part of the second act, that wonderful conversation between Angelo and Isabella, in which he promises her the life of her brother if she will yield her body to him. I shall never forget with what expression he recited this, with what extraordinary power, how he worked himself up, like a great actor, and yet not like an actor, but rather like someone who was living the play, who was living it at that moment. You remember how Isabel says: 'Sir, believe this, I had rather give my body than my soul.' And how Angelo answers: 'I talk not of your soul: our compelled sins stand more for number than accompt.' And how she says that women are 'frail as the glasses where they view themselves, which are as easy broke as they make forms.' And then her passionate disgust: 'Ha, little honour to be much believed, and most pernicious purpose! Seeming, seeming! I will proclaim thee; Angelo; look for't': And Angelo answers: 'Who will believe thee, Isabel? My unsoil'd name, the austere-ness of my life, my vouch against you, and my place i' the state, will so your accusation overweigh, that you shall stifle in your own report and smell of calumny.' And when he came to the passage

... how ever does it go? ... for twenty years, since that day, I haven't heard or read those words, but time cannot erase them ... he spoke them with such passionate and burning defiance that it made us all shudder: 'I have begun, and now I give my sensual race the rein: fit thy consent to my sharp appetite; lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes, that banish what they sue for; redeem thy brother by yielding up thy body to my will. ...' Then suddenly some ladies at the back of the room screamed; one heard the clatter of plates and metal; there was a panic; I pushed through the crowd and saw that Anna had fallen on the floor, and in falling had knocked over one of the service tables, so that she was lying amidst the broken china and the overturned tea and pastries, with her limbs convulsed and her eyes rolling. This was the first of her 'attacks' that I had seen; the second was in her flat, six or seven months later, after the scene with Elli. We took her into our hostess's bedroom; Waremmé too did what he could for her; but it was some hours before she had recovered sufficiently to be taken home. That evening Waremmé asked me to go to a wine-cellar with him; it did not take long to persuade me; it seemed to me that there was something to explain which he alone could explain, for I had felt that there was some strange connection between his recitation and what had happened to Anna. He ordered a bottle of champagne, and emptied it by himself; then a second, at the same time smoking one cigarette after another, paying no attention to my perturbed expression, nor to the conjectures which I stammered from time to time. It was already midnight—we were the last guests in the place—when he suddenly struck his forehead with his fist, exclaiming: 'What a barbarian I am, what a hopeless idiot not to have thought of it. It must have seemed to her like a frightful blow from behind; where in heaven's name were my senses that such a thing could happen to me?' I stared. I began to have an inkling. I knew that Anna had a morbid antipathy for the theatre, even for any sort of dramatic performance; but the fact that Waremmé should have recited a wonderful dramatic scene before a roomful

of friends could not possibly have been the cause of such a nervous catastrophe. I said something of the sort to Waremmé; he seized me by the wrist across the table, turning white as chalk, and said: 'By God, no, but there is a frightful similarity. Life once permitted itself to play a hideous jest upon her, placing an Angelo in her path who was not satisfied with insolent demands, but who translated his desire into action. You understand me?' *Did* I understand? I understood so well that from that moment it was the only thing that I did understand; it excluded everything else from my mind, unthinkable as it was. I had the feeling . . . but what use to talk of feelings; the world was suddenly a cesspool. Waremmé looked like a ghost; he said I must go home with him; he could not talk here, nor could he be alone; the whole affair had affected him too strongly; it had brought the whole thing to life again; he must tell it all to a friend; he had kept it to himself too long; it was lacerating his soul. And more to the same effect. So I accompanied him to his flat; he brought out some cognac and drank a quarter of a bottle, describing the details of the affair as he walked up and down, but speaking only of Angelo and Isabella. I knew of the amateur performance in Cologne in which Anna had played a prominent part, but I did not know that Waremmé had acted as their producer; he had mentioned this only in passing, as a matter of no importance. They had rehearsed and played an old French pastoral, with the old music. Anna had played the part of a young noblewoman disguised as a Pierrot. After the performance, this man . . . this mysterious Angelo sent word to her dressing-room that he must see her on urgent business that would admit of no delay. She received him. It was fairly late. Anna, according to her custom, had taken a long time to change her clothes; the employees of the theatre had left; the people who had taken part in the performance had left; the maid who was to take Anna home was waiting at the stage door. Anna, therefore, was alone with this Angelo, who, of course, was not entirely a stranger to her—as I could deduce from all that he had told me—alone, in this empty building, between an empty

courtyard and an empty corridor; it struck me how admirably he described the situation, although he was so passionately moved; almost with literary finesse. Why the visitor had chosen this time for such crushing news I don't know; it was all so strangely enigmatical. . . . Well, to be brief, he brought her the news that her brother Eric had been killed in a skirmish in South-West Africa; the telegram had arrived that day. She had loved this brother beyond anyone in the world. Perhaps he was the only person she had ever really loved. It was a very profound relationship; just a little mystical, perhaps. One can imagine how this unexpected news affected her. Whether he, this Angelo, had been especially entrusted with the message, Waremmé did not say; only that he had tried to calm and console her. But he did not stop at consolation; he threw the mask off, so to speak; he became violent; so tempting an opportunity would not soon recur; he paid no regard to her refusal; her resistance merely spurred him to extremes, and so she became his victim. While Waremmé was talking I felt as though I must go out and search the world over for that beast, in order to strike him dead; but during his narrative he had worked himself into such a passion of grief that he had hardly finished before he threw himself into an arm-chair and burst into a frightful fit of weeping. After he had calmed himself he left the room, and I heard him moving about in the bathroom. He took a shower-bath, and a quarter of an hour later he returned in elegant pyjamas. Singular. And singular too was the circumstance that he was now composed and superior, drawing my attention to the fact that the least failure of tact on my part in my relations with Anna might seriously injure her health. Besides himself, I was the only person who knew the dismal secret. This was a mutual bond and obligation. In the extremity of her despair Anna had confided in him, at a time when she felt that life for her was already over; he had succeeded in comforting her, in dissipating certain moral prejudices and tendencies; the miscreant meanwhile had disappeared; there were a hundred reasons which would prevent him from reappearing. Objectively viewed, it was

rather like a person being knocked over by a maddened horse and carried bleeding from the scene of the accident; subjectively, of course—and here the recollection seemed to overwhelm him again, and his voice trembled—subjectively, if one thought of the vulnerable delicacy of a highly imaginative and emotional nature, one could not dismiss the matter so lightly. To him, at all events, it was a tragic load on his soul, and it was only because he felt himself so greatly her friend, and because he knew that friendship was the only soil in which the injured roots could find fresh nourishment, that he did not give her up. This sounded curiously like a warning, or as though there were some purpose behind it. Finally, he put his arm affectionately round my shoulders, and said that he was not so foolish as to ask me for an oath of silence; he thought too highly of my common sense and delicacy; one's word of honour and so on meant nothing to him; the necessity was dictated by the situation, which made any rough contact a crime; the fragility of this most wonderful woman called for discretion. If only on her account, we must regard ourselves as allies united to protect her. I gave him my hand; I was incapable of speaking. I don't remember how I got into the street or home; my brain felt as though it were burned out. . . .”

5

Maurizius walked slowly across the cell, twice, with his dragging step, before he sat down again and continued: “When I ask myself to-day, after more than twenty years—having had time, ample time, to consider the whole matter from every point of view—what the real, the profounder motives were which moved Waremmé to make this disclosure, I cannot find any satisfactory answer. Perhaps he wanted to prepare me, to forestall some hint or rumour that might reach me from whatever quarter. But what had he to fear? From Anna, nothing; as for the mysterious Angelo, it is scarcely necessary to say that he was a mere fiction. No one else knew. No one else in the world had an inkling of the truth; no one had even a suspicion in that

direction. Why prepare me? What had he to fear from me? I was rendered helpless by my consideration for my sister-in-law's reputation and her person. I might perhaps have killed him in my anger; but his crafty calculations could not protect him from that danger. He must have felt fairly safe, or he would not have ventured on such an audacious game with me. It was for none of these reasons; perhaps rather he wanted to scare me off. He had long ago noticed that my relation to Anna was becoming more and more intimate and affectionate; he wanted to stop this, to make me understand that she was not to be touched, not to be pursued; that there were barriers here which even he could not break down; how much less then could I hope to pass them? Even he ventured to offer no more than service and friendship; in this case there was no possibility of anything else, for anyone who was not a conscienceless scoundrel. It would have been quite consistent with his character to spoil the game by these indirect means, even for a rival whom he did not take seriously. I say this because of what I came to understand later; at that time I was dazzled—although my suspicions were rapidly increasing. I could not get his mysterious gift of persuasion out of my mind; I felt as though he had only been trying to exhibit himself to me in a magnanimous pose; and whenever I recalled his great outburst of grief and emotion I seemed to detect the same mastery in that as in the recitation of the scene from Shakespeare. Both, probably, had the same origin; it was superfluous to look for the plan or purpose behind them. It was perhaps his uncontrollable instinct of self-appreciation and self-magnification; a certain sentimentality was second nature to him; under certain circumstances he would have risked his neck for it. Perhaps the whole affair was a figment of his imagination, a mystification, a Waremmé saga; even this was possible. But of course, in this last assumption I was mistaken. Up to that time I had believed that he was fond of me; at all events that he preferred me to many other people; I had sufficient reason to think so; but now suddenly it seemed to me that he hated me, hated me with a groundless, mysterious hatred

which would make him capable of anything, because he was capable of anything, whether for good or for evil; in justice I must give him his due: he was capable even of good; but why in the world did he hate me? I don't know even now, for jealousy alone will not explain it; he was too despotic a person for that, far too firmly convinced of his own greatness and superiority. So I could find no foothold, no support anywhere; I wandered about aimlessly for days; I should have liked to hide myself; I was so afraid of seeing Anna again; I felt that I must not let her look into my eyes; she would see there a certain picture which was driving me mad. I behaved like a man whose most precious possession, a Leonardo or a Rubens, had been soiled by vandals; as though I had been her owner, and had held acknowledged rights to her virginity; as though this thing ought not to have happened to her, merely because I was in the world. I was simply torn in two; I hated my work; I couldn't find any peace anywhere; I couldn't utter five consecutive sentences to anyone, and my life with Elli was becoming a torment, in spite of all the goodness and understanding which she had shown at first. A few weeks later there was a change. Things could not go on as they had been going; I had to give vent to my feelings; I had to talk to Anna, even though the greatest misfortune might result. I was never capable of hiding anything. Everyone could read on my face what was going on in my mind. I always found it hard to keep a secret; this sometimes landed me in serious difficulties; but I was never easy with a secret; it tormented and oppressed me, and I was often indiscreet out of sheer egoism, and would betray other people's confidences. I was consequently regarded as unreliable; and quite rightly so. In this case I had already been silent longer than I could bear, and I said to myself: It is a delusion that is keeping you silent; it is your duty to Anna and to yourself to cast off these paralysing fetters. So I asked her one day if I could speak to her, and she allowed me to call on her. She had guessed long before this what was wrong with me. It had often seemed to me that something was fermenting and struggling in

her mind, as though she was longing to confess something. But people of her sort do not confess; not of their own accord; they would go to the rack first. Whenever her figure and her personality occurred very vividly to my mind, I never doubted that something terrible had crossed her path, something that had marked her for ever. And when I was so near to her that I felt that I had only to stretch out my hand and take her, and all would be clear to me, she would suddenly go out like a taper, and become quite cold and conventional. Many weeks later she told me that she had never even in the confessional alluded to the crime which had been committed against her. I call it a crime; she herself made only veiled allusions to it, or did not mention it at all. On that day, then, when we were alone in her room, and I had assured myself that we should not be disturbed or overheard, I summoned up all my courage—cowards always make straight for their goal—and proceeded to ask her directly whether this and that had really happened. Of course, I only made indefinite allusions; though they were definite enough. She started a little and gazed into space. Her face assumed an expression of sullen obstinacy. Once I saw her look towards the door, as though considering whether she had not better leave the room. I snatched at her hand, and she folded her arms across her bosom and compressed her lips. I said: 'Listen to me, Anna; it can't alter anything between us.' She was silent. I said: 'You must understand that it was no doing of mine that I heard of this; but since I do know it, I can perhaps help you to get over it.' She still remained silent. I don't remember all I said; I believe I even spoke of calling the guilty man to account. She was silent, still silent. I felt as though I were facing a dumb woman. At last I said: 'Anna, if you care as much for me as for that pincushion over there on the table, tell me what I can do for you, or at least what position I am to take up; whether you will allow me to speak to you about it; say something, say anything, only don't sit there like the Sphinx and leave me to play *Cædipus*.' She was silent. I took up my hat and was about to rush out of the room. Then she raised her arms a little; but

slight as the movement was, it was full of entreaty. Then I said, clasping my hands: 'Anna, is it true? Don't say anything but yes or no.' She said 'Yes,' in a lifeless tone. Then I said: 'Good; now everything is all right; now you have shown me that you think at least that I am worthy of an answer; now only tell me one thing more; is it a burden to you, is it a grief; I mean, does it darken your life?' She nodded. It moved me unutterably, that nod. And I asked, further: 'Have you the feeling that you can't get over it?' Again that nod. I knelt down before her and took her hand; this time she let me hold it without resisting me. 'And is it he,' I asked, 'is it this man who has darkened your life?' 'Yes,' she replied. 'And can I do anything to free you from him, from the threat he holds over you or the pressure he puts upon you?' She whispered thoughtfully, with quivering lips: 'Perhaps.'—'Then tell me who he is; I ask you, tell me his name!' Then she stood up and stepped back from me. 'Oh,' she said, in a long-drawn murmur, 'don't you know?' and she laughed, a curiously arrogant or contemptuous laugh. 'You don't know? . . . You don't know that? Well, then, what do you want of me?' The expression of her eyes was hard and angry. Now it was my turn to be silent. What was the meaning of this? You will realize how stupefied I was, how bewitched, when I tell you that in spite of my suspicion, which, of course, only developed when I had been seeing Waremmé for a few days, I had not even then the courage to accuse him! Anna, greatly as it angered and disturbed her to learn that Waremmé had made me his confidant, nevertheless felt more easy about me; that I now realized clearly. But, of course, she could never have dreamed of the sentimental syrup of lies which he had poured over his ecstatic revelations; for no matter how well we know another person, we are never fully conscious of all his subterfuges and evasions; they remain mere knowledge. At the moment when she turned away from me with such insulting harshness, exclaiming, half under her breath: 'Go, do go, it's terrible that you are still here!' the revelation came to me, and I almost shrieked: 'So it was he!'

She said nothing. She went over to the window, and once more she laughed, very quietly, that laugh which sounded so insolent and so despairing. 'It's all right, now,' I said, feeling that I was turning white to my very throat; 'there is nothing more to be considered; I see clearly; now I can act; you will have nothing further to fear from him!' With that I left her. From the nearest coffee-house I rang up Waremme's flat to ask whether he was at home. I was told that he had gone to Bingen and would not be back until the following day. Oh, my fury, my impatience! That same evening Anna sent me a note in which she said: 'Don't do anything; it's all useless; you will simply injure yourself.' No, my dear, I thought, there is going to be no more dodging. He shan't talk me out of my senses this time; the matter is going to be settled, one way or the other. What I meant by 'one way or the other' I no longer know; however, I was reckoning without my host. Listen; and I'll tell what happened; how shamefully, how shabbily, I reckoned *with* my host. In the first place, Waremme postponed his return for two days longer. In those days I was not the sort of man to be strengthened by waiting. Meantime, Pauline Caspot wrote that Hildegard was ill with scarlet fever. Beside myself with anxiety, I implored Anna to go to Hertford. She said she couldn't; she hadn't the strength. Besides, she was making some arrangement with a Frankfurt pianist; he was going to put her through some sort of examination. Elli had been insisting, with hostile obstinacy, that she must take up some regular occupation; now she was to take up painting, now she was to teach the piano, now she was to study languages, now she was to set up as a milliner. It was simply hellish; a perpetual torment.

"My interview with Anna had been on the Tuesday; on the Friday Waremme returned. As I was passing the club, about eleven o'clock, he was standing at the door, talking to several members. He came towards me, with outstretched arms, as though he had not seen me for years and had longed for me as a brother. I, dizzy with excitement, said: 'I must talk to you, Waremme.' He looked at me sharply, drew up his chest and

hollowed his back, and said: 'I understand. You have abused my confidence; you have not been able to hold your tongue; very well, let's go to my place.' He called a cab and we drove to his flat.

" 'And what can I do for you, sir?' he said coldly and sarcastically as we entered his rooms. 'I ought simply to shoot you down, Waremmé,' was my reply, 'but perhaps it's a pity to waste the bullet. Also I wish to avoid a scandal, so I leave it to your ingenuity to suggest another solution; another way of satisfying Anna's honour.' You can tell from these high-falutin' phrases that my decision was already wavering. He answered me with a shrug of his shoulders, and said, with dignity: 'I don't understand a word of what you are saying; talk like a reasonable man.' I shouted at him, beside myself: 'How much farther are you going to go with this comedy? Or am I to believe that Angelo and Waremmé are two different persons, like Ormuzd and Ahriman? At least confess to your true colour, and let us settle the matter as is customary between man and man, or do you prefer a horsewhip?' He turned pale, ran his hand over the back of his head, and gazed at me with a compassionate surprise which utterly infuriated me. 'Between man and man? No,' he said. 'You must first behave like a man and not like a foolish boy. Please, please!' and he waved me back with both hands as I was about to fly at him. 'These are tavern manners; if you wish to proceed in accordance with the students' code this conversation is superfluous. Listen to me, calmly; afterwards—for all I care—send me your seconds. I am entirely at your disposal.' And now came the most indescribable and incomprehensible thing: an oratorical performance such as I have never heard since. It made even your plea to the jury seem like helpless stammering. How had I dared to accuse him? On what was the accusation based? On any complaint of Anna's? No? Merely on a hint? A verbal hint? No? A silent admission? Merely on that? I regarded that as a sufficient excuse to abuse him, *him*, Gregor Waremmé, as though he had been a stable-boy? To speak disparagingly of Anna was the last thing he

wished to do; her truth of intention was as little to be doubted as her sincerity; but had I no eyes in my head, that I had failed to perceive her condition? If not, would I kindly inform myself? Any psychiatric dilettante could instruct me as to the typical phenomena. 'Or have you never heard, sir,' he asked me, throwing back his head, 'of psychomotor inhibitions, conditions which may be intensified to the point of catatonic stupor, and of which we know that a violent emotional shock may suddenly break down a long-protracted resistance, often with disastrous results to persons in the sufferer's environment? Have you never heard of falsifications of the memory, of disorders of the imagination, in which, in all innocence, owing to a complete similarity of situations, a person from an alien sphere of action is identified with a bygone situation? Investigate the matter; take a course at our clinic. Unfortunately,' he continued, with the most painful emotion, 'these phenomena are not new to me in Anna.' For years he had devoted himself to fighting them; by means of a carefully tested psychotherapy he had succeeded in effecting an improvement, and for the time being in eliminating them altogether, but he had not been prepared for the brutal intervention of a third person. He had most earnestly and by all that was sacred implored me to use the most delicate consideration; why hadn't he held his tongue; why hadn't he drunk himself insensible on that accursed evening? But how could he ever have supposed that I, a friend, a man of cultivated mentality, of sensitive perceptions, would ever have crushed that tremulous blossom with coarse and clumsy fingers? That sublime creature, he cried, with tears in his eyes, so exquisite, so fragile, equally beautiful without and within, with this one raw and wounded spot! Couldn't one see that; wasn't a Maurizius enough of an artist, enough of a poet, to hear what lies behind words, to see what lies behind appearances?

" 'For God's sake, Waremme, forgive me; forget what I've said, advise me!' I don't remember exactly what followed; whether our reconciliation took place that day or the next. That, in any case, was the result. That day, at all events, he did his utmost

to convince me of his innocence; or shall I say to overpower me, to force me into this conviction by an unexampled outburst of eloquence and emotion; for his whole nature was that of a tyrant, a ravisher. Six weeks later, at our second great discussion, when he no longer regarded it as necessary to insist on the hideous lie, or, what was worse, the half-lie of a psychopathic disorder, I had become as wax in his hands. He had sucked all will-power and decision out of me like a vampire, and I accepted what he had prepared for me as my fate. But I haven't yet come to that. This was Friday, I think, the tenth of February: all these dates are fixed in my mind like milestones. On Sunday Anna had come to us for lunch. After lunch Elli had a dispute with her; I no longer remember the cause; I remember only that Elli was in the wrong, and that Anna defended herself with unusually calm and pertinent arguments. She was as calm as a lake in the mountains just before it freezes. Her voice tortured me, her whole personality tortured me, her—what shall I call it? here again I must make use of the same expression—that mysterious transparency of hers, a transparency which revealed nothing. I went down into the garden and hurried aimlessly to and fro; then, when I saw her at the balcony window, I beckoned to her; she considered awhile, smiled at me, and came down. On the steps she slipped, and I sprang towards her, and was in time to catch her in my arms. I mention this only because it was one of the three occasions on which I held her in my arms; otherwise I shouldn't speak of it. We walked up and down for awhile, I talking jerkily of all sorts of things, and she silent, as was her way; but all at once I had the feeling that she was expecting to hear something definite from me. At last it was just as though she had asked me aloud. Then I told her, in my desperate desire to be open and honest with her—I could not be anything else; little as lying generally troubled me, I could not lie to her—I told her: 'I have been talking to Waremmé. The suspicion you aroused in my mind is unfounded; I was on a false track. I would give the rest of my life if you would tell me who it was, for it can't have been he; that's impossible,

isn't it, Anna?' Her face turned as white as porcelain; its peaceful beauty became distorted with hatred; she stood still, and whispered to herself: 'How repulsive you are to me, O God, how unspeakably repulsive, you and he and your wife and all of you!' I was startled to the depths of my soul; in my stupidity I did not understand in what sort of a light I had shown myself to her; and from that day onwards, look you, the horrible thing began, compared with which everything that had gone before was child's play, and which one can never get over, never forget, if one has once been through it."

6

He rose, went over to the iron stove, and placed his hands flat on the top, as though he were cold and as though the stove had been burning. Herr von Andergast took his cigarette-case from his pocket, opened it, and saw that it was empty. He sent for the warder and asked him to fetch some cigarettes. It was a quarter of an hour before the man returned. While he was gone Herr von Andergast stood at the window and looked into the courtyard, where the sixth group of convicts were finishing their melancholy walk. I shall order the car for two o'clock, he decided; I must ask Herr Pauli downstairs to telephone to the office, so that they may know where I am; if in the meantime Sophia has sent word I will make an appointment for early in the evening. It may be that she has heard from the boy during the last few days; that's possible, although highly improbable; and in that case the worst sting of the encounter would be eliminated; perhaps even it need not take place.—But these domestic and professional reflections were merely a half-deliberate camouflage from a different sphere of thought, no more substantial than the moisture of his breath upon the window-pane. When the warder had brought the cigarettes and departed, with a salute and a click of the heels, Herr von Andergast offered one to the convict, but Maurizius, who had now taken his hands from the cold stove, bowed stiffly and said: "Later on, if you will be so kind." Herr von Andergast himself had no desire to smoke. "The time which

you had in mind just now extended from the middle of February to . . . to October," he said endeavouring, with a recapitulating dryness which affected even himself disagreeably for a moment, to induce the convict to resume his narrative. In his effort to seem unconcerned, although it was hardly worth while any longer to make a show of unconcern, Herr von Andergast ran his fingers through his grey beard, from his Adam's apple upwards, while his violet-blue eyes wandered about the cell, his glance resting for a moment on everything but the figure of its occupant.

Maurizius lifted the cover off the stove, stared into the dark cavity, and covered it again. "It was simply a breaking on the wheel," he resumed, "in which each was at once the wheel and the victim. All the time two or three were co-operating to crush the third or the fourth. A pretty mechanism. Anna between me and Waremme, Elli between me and Anna, Anna between Elli and me, I myself between Anna and Waremme, and Elli between all three of us. That went on, day in, day out, week in, week out, until the hideous end. If you would give me a cigarette now I should be thankful." He smoked for a while in silence. From time to time he raised his eyes uncertainly. He seemed to be wondering whether it was possible to make what he was about to tell at all comprehensible. Even now, in all probability, it must seem to the other to be hopelessly confused.

"At first I could not make out where I stood with Anna," he continued; "until March she came to see us only two or three times, and she always chose the hours when I was away. From Elli I heard that she was in the best of spirits; that she had ordered various new dresses, and was going to teas and dances; ostensibly with friends of her own sex, but as a matter of fact she met Waremme at all these places. And the more she avoided me and our house the more eagerly Waremme sought my society, as though he set the greatest value upon it. At the end of March I published my work on the influence of religion upon the plastic arts, from the Nazarenes to Uhde; he wrote a review of it in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, comparing me with Justi, and—exaggerating somewhat—even with Rohde and Burckhardt. I felt honoured,

of course, and flattered, even though I was conscious, and freely admitted, that his share in the ideas which I had developed was not inconsiderable. But suddenly there was talk of a plagiarism which I was supposed to have committed, and when I investigated the rumour I was told that Waremme himself had been spreading it everywhere. I called him to account; he laughed at me, and said: 'Silly fellow, don't bother your head with such nonsense; there is no such thing as plagiarism among superior intellects.' That same evening, as we were leaving the card-table in the club, he drew me aside, and said, with a look of amusement: 'Do you know who was responsible for that silly talk of plagiarism? You will never guess. Your sister-in-law, Anna. She found a few sentences in one of my earliest essays which exactly correspond with your wonderful criticism of Feuerbach; I had already, at that time, drawn attention to the eclectic neo-classicism of this painter.' This seemed very curious to me, and on the following day I asked Anna whether it was true. She knew nothing whatever about it. She evinced no interest in the matter, but she told me, in her frozen manner, that Waremme had become engaged, a week ago, to Lili Quästor, and that the girl had poisoned herself the night before. I had heard of the engagement three days previously, although it had not been made public, but since Waremme had not said anything about it I had not dared to believe it. 'You look as if you were responsible for her death, Anna,' I said, horrified. She gave me one of her penetrating glances and replied, 'So I am; you have hit the nail on the head.' To which I replied, 'Anna, think what you are saying!' Then it appeared that she had written a letter to the girl, in which she had announced her incontestable prior rights. I said: 'You must have dreamed that, Anna.' I denied passionately that she was capable of doing such a thing; and then it came out that Waremme had forced her to write the letter. The engagement had been too precipitate; the girl had bored him; the advantages for which he had hoped had proved on closer examination to be illusory; whether he had seduced her was never known; in short, he wanted to get out of the affair, and Anna was a good enough instrument.

Perhaps, too, it was a means of increasing his influence over her. He knew the pieces which he was handling in his game of chess, but this Lili Quästor was a woman who could not be played with. To such a man calculation and compulsion are merely conceptions, mere empty husks. What happened later, up to the moment of the murder, was calculation; and yet it was not, because there was a burning cyclone at work there, a destructive element with which no one could reckon; even the devil went wrong with his arithmetic there, for he too had his stake in the pool. This burning wind, which I now began to feel, first blew Anna closer than ever to me; every glance, every syllable said: 'Free me from this incubus!' She had moments of such terror that she felt, as she once said, as though she wanted to slip into my breast pocket for protection; but she could tolerate me only when I was gentle and patient; the slightest gesture of approach frightened her beyond measure; and if I spoke of flight she had a curious way of holding up her open right hand to me, as though Elli's image were imprinted on it. Adultery was to her the sin of sins. I came to know her pretty intimately during that time, between the end of March and the eighteenth of May; for from that day onward everything was different. I forgot to mention—probably because there is a good reason for not rescuing it from oblivion—for it was in the depths of my weakness and my dishonourable subservience—that Waremmé, in the meantime, had given me to understand quite clearly that the whole tale of the mysterious Angelo in Cologne had been an invention upon which he had seized in his distress, in order not to endanger our friendship. He confessed this to me during an excursion to Biebricht; we had lost our way in the woods, and were sitting on the trunk of a fallen tree, waiting for the moon to rise. I have spoken of my weakness and cowardice in my relations to him, but that night he was as honest and sincere as was possible to so dæmonic and equivocal a character. He was, I should explain, a very impressionable man; his surroundings affected him enormously; a landscape, or the darkness of a forest. I saw him once, in a heavy thunderstorm, in such a condition that I was really sorry for him. This fear of thunderstorms—or

whatever it was—he once gave me a profound explanation of the matter—he had transferred to Anna likewise. During a thunder-storm she was simply a fluttering little bird. So, as we were crouching on the tree-trunk, neither seeing the other's face, he came out bluntly with the statement that he had had no other choice than to appease me with the hectic tale of the alleged Angelo, for he could not have borne to know that I hated him and regarded him as an enemy. Now that by long and varied experience I had acquired a deeper knowledge of his character he no longer feared such a defection; I was as well aware as he that we were chained to one another, not merely by the wonderful creature who was to both of us the highest thing on earth, but also by the strongest intellectual bond which could unite two men in a serious historical crisis. Gently, gently, don't be so bombastic! was my thought; nevertheless, I listened with breathless attention, for who could resist the Orpheus-like charm of his conversation? And then, to be honest, I was unutterably weary of all the to and fro and up and down, and nothing surprised me any longer. And so he began to speak of his love for Anna. That wrenched me out of my apathy: he said things that made me shudder. I can't repeat his words; I no longer remember them; I only know that they dropped into me like a shower of red-hot nails; I don't remember what images or comparisons he employed; I know only that while he was speaking I asked myself uneasily once or twice: Do you count for anything beside this man? He admitted that he had forced her in the dressing-room of the theatre, but he said: 'If I had not done so I should have hanged myself an hour afterwards.' I believed it of him. 'Although she fought me like an outraged angel,' he added, 'her innermost soul was already mine, as it is still mine to-day; and she knew that, and knows it now.' He wasn't a robber, nor a sensualist *à la* Karamazov; it was blasphemy to drivel about crime when two lives would be destroyed if their union was prevented. When the moon at last rose over the tree-tops we walked the whole way to the station in silence; only once, when we were near our destination, he stopped, and laid his hand on my shoulder, and said: 'I am sorry for you, Maurizius; it's all up

with you; if you don't break away from her it will be your ruin.' I can still feel how my heart rose into my throat as I replied: 'Those are idle phrases, Waremme; I know I'm on the edge of a precipice, but if God would do me the favour of putting a stop to your tricks I should feel better.' He shrugged his shoulders and replied: 'God does not do anyone the favour of altering the fate which He has destined for him; I too am only an instrument.' You will admit that this was not an everyday conversation; indeed, there was something cataclysmic about it. It was, however, the last conversation I had with him which I can remember accurately, word for word; the rest have dissolved into mist; which may well be because the whole fabric was crumbling, and the words of the individual actors were no longer of much importance."

7

He interrupted himself, and once more moved with a curiously crooked gait along the wall of the cell to the corner, and when he began to speak again it seemed as if he were talking to himself, and had quite forgotten the presence of the attorney-general. Sometimes he would mutter a whole sentence; of others only fragments were audible. Now and again he would interrupt himself, gesticulating in silence; for example, he stood for a full quarter of a minute with his hand pressed to his forehead, shaking his head. In all this there was something mysterious, and, in its way, impressive. He seemed to be finding it difficult to isolate events; and in respect of the critical moment when Elli had exerted a fatal and decisive influence on the course of the tragedy his memory was less clear than in respect of other happenings. He kept on reverting to the eighteenth of May; it seemed to be a significant date in his relations to Anna. (Herr von Andergast remembered that the eloquent inscription on the photograph which Elli had found in her sister's desk had borne this date.) In speaking of his meetings and conversations with Anna he avoided, with an almost fearful reluctance, anything that might reveal her in an unfavourable light. Herr von Andergast

could not help wondering at his discretion; it seemed to him like a superstitiously cherished fossil. He had the impression that on this eighteenth of May Anna had for the first and only time given Maurizius unmistakable proof of her affection for him, whereas at other times he had to be content with scanty and extremely equivocal evidence. Perhaps it was a fleeting caress; perhaps at some chance moment he had begged and received a kiss, and in the morbid intensity of his emotions he had overestimated this charity, and had drawn deductions from it on which his mirage was finally shattered. But from his confused allusions one could deduce that Anna, on this occasion, had been rather less reserved than usual, especially in respect of her relations to Waremmé. In Waremmé's behaviour to her there was much that was incomprehensible, until she assured him that since the infamous assault in Cologne there had been no sort of physical intimacy between them, not the least demonstration of affection, not the least admission which could give him any hope of her surrender. All this must have exasperated the supremely vain, jealous, sensual and obstinate man beyond endurance. That she could not free herself from him she did not deny; she admitted, despairingly, that she was bound hand and foot, that her will was broken; and yet she resisted him, always, always. She showed Maurizius the letters which he had written to her in the course of eighteen months; more than four hundred letters, twelve, fifteen, twenty pages long: outpourings, entreaties, dreams, poems; it made her turn pale and chilled her to the heart merely to speak of them. This, of course, was on the famous eighteenth of May. A few days later, Anna, helpless and bewildered, told him that Waremmé had made her a proposal of marriage. Incredible as it might seem, this divorced husband, the father of two children, who somewhere were knocking about abroad, a man without visible means of support, who jeered at bourgeois domesticity, a gambler, a political adventurer and a visionary—for it was becoming more and more obvious that he was that—wanted to absorb the woman he had already half destroyed into his restless, insecure, uprooted life, in order to destroy her completely. To Maurizius

the idea was revolting, but he could not protest. A pious old Catholic lady (so he understood), a Baroness von Löwen, was going to give the girl a considerable dowry; but first of all she was to retire for six months to an Ursuline convent. Things were more and more incomprehensible, madder and madder. No, he Maurizius, could not protest; scandal was voiding its venom in the open street, but he could not lift a hand to save her, for he didn't even know whether she wanted to be saved; he didn't even know whether she loved him, or endured him only, or actually hated him, any more than he knew whether she loved, feared, or detested Waremme. One knew nothing about her; to understand her one would have had to cut open her breast and dissect her heart. Women of this kind, so it seemed to him to-day, now that in the cold of decades of merciless criticism the tide of life had become transparent ice, have no true kernel to their character; they are morbidly solitary and self-centred, restricted to themselves and their own fate. (He was walking about the cell gesticulating): "Vessels to whom we give their content, perhaps even their soul, certainly their movement and direction. Perhaps they become our victims merely because they are so narcissistically engrossed in themselves. And what is narcissism? It is essentially incorporeal, and because we try to embrace the mirage, because it has no human body, they hold us responsible, they make us atone to the day of judgment. And so we victimize ourselves; we are like the fool who loved the snow fairy."

This, it seemed, was his terrible final verdict. "And it was the same with Elli," continued Maurizius, with his eyes closed, as though he were talking in his sleep; "I suddenly discovered what it meant to be sisters; and what profound mysteries nature utters from her womb. It was just because there was as much difference between them as though they had been born in different parts of the world, that so many similarities, so much that was identical, came to light. Identical . . . but only, it seemed, as coal and diamonds are identical. One must remember that Elli . . . that selfish selflessness, or whatever you like to call it, existed in her too. I don't want to whitewash myself; there's nothing in me left to

salvage; I am eliminating myself; but suddenly it was no longer a human being that I had before me. She was a she-wolf, a blood-thirsty, raving she-wolf, when she turned against her sister. And a pitiless usurer, insisting on repayment of her loan with interest and compound interest, when she turned against me. The whole fabric suddenly collapsed and burst asunder. A curious thing, what we call deportment . . . the framework of the character . . . well, it had gone. There was nothing left but a raving fury. A woman of the greatest refinement, cultured, intelligent, kindly, honourable and magnanimous. And that. . . . One thing was made a reproach against me . . . was exploited . . . namely, that in spite of these hideous disputes we continued to live together. . . . Well, yes . . . a man will degrade himself as far as a woman will let him fall. I repeat, that this is not intended as a justification . . . my whole misfortune was summed up in this one point: one can, so to speak, drive an unclean psychical bargain with sensuality, transact a base exchange for one's dreams and ideals. Whenever I have thought about the matter I have concluded that except for one man in a thousand, all do this and nothing else, and so the whole world debauches itself. I at all events was not that one exception; not I. And Elli played *va banque* when she stole my dreams from before my eyes. She did not know that stolen dreams become a pestilence to the thief. But what am I saying? After all, it was only in flesh and blood that we should mingle our bodies in the misery of our hearts. But then the awakening, the revenge; the feeling of rage: you are still yourself: while she feels that she has been betrayed. . . . The years by which she was older than I became her Erinnyes; she and I, in one another's embrace, plunged headlong into the deepest pit of baseness and malignity. When she turned spy, and questioned people about me, and fought with me over that wretched little sum of money, and screamed her misery out of the window, so that it might as well have been printed in the papers day by day, and swept through the house, night after night, like a will-o'-the-wisp, and could not understand, oh, *would* not understand that I was a poor human creature like herself, who must drink the cup that God

had appointed. . . . Then there came a day when I said to myself: 'It would be better, woman, if you did not exist, better that you should disappear from this horrible scene.' Sir, I tell you that it seemed to me that it would be an act of benevolence to destroy her, for—so I told myself—such a life is a burden and a torment to the person who lives it, and a burden and a torment to those who must share it with her. Is there to be no way out; should one not be permitted to make peace? With this criminal wish upon my conscience I am, of course, not guiltless. No, indeed. Don't think that. . . . I am not guiltless, still less am I innocent—which is something quite different. There is a point where the human life in an idea is finished, and what follows then is like the after-birth after a confinement. . . . But one must not venture too far; I know, I know. In my bitterest extremity I said to Anna: 'If the worst comes to the worst, I shall shoot you, and then myself, and then we shall have peace.' That was on the day—it was near the end of September—when that nasty affair of Waremmé and the students came to light. That knocked the bottom out of things. It all but killed Anna; I already owed him all that money; my own wife would not help me; she was on her knees to that interest-sweating capital of hers, praying to it. It was like a case of possession: was she still a living human being, with the living ideas of a human being in her breast, or only a wretched corpse, that twitched as though it was alive, like the body of a galvanized frog? But that's beside the point, so far as my guilt is concerned; I for my part was done with the whole business; I was only sorry on Anna's account; but she did not want to die; I have often racked my brains as to why she protested with such crazy horror against death; perhaps it was the pious child in her, the belief in the sinfulness of suicide. I have heard, too, that extraordinarily beautiful people find it much harder to rid themselves of the fear of death than others, as though beauty had imposed a duty on them of which people like us know nothing; that was probably the reason why she was so afraid of my return. Since I had said that about shooting her she trembled when she saw me; she probably frightened Elli with it too, and drove her out of the

house; in her feverish terror she screamed at her: 'Your husband is coming, he is going to kill me!' It must have been something of the sort. She must have run through the house like a doe before the beaters . . . with the fear of death in her very bones . . . it must have been like that. . . ."

He pressed the thumb and middle finger of his right hand to his temples. Herr von Andergast rose, as slowly as though his limbs had turned to lead. "Like that . . ." he murmured, "so that is how. . . ." Then, after a sighing pause, speaking out of his mechanical knowledge of the course of the trial, he asked, with an assumption of his dry professional manner: "And her . . . her playing the piano just before this: you think it was simply that in her senseless terror she no longer knew what she was doing?"—"Quite possible," replied Maurizius, with reserve. "And then?" continued Herr von Andergast, with a really superhuman attempt to appear indifferent, or at most superficially interested. He even pulled out his watch; he did not, however, press the spring, but slipped it slowly back into his pocket. "Then," echoed Maurizius with a stubborn, malicious glance at his questioner, "then . . . why, there you must go by the records. They can inform you better than I." But after a sinister silence, during which the small feminine teeth bit nervously at his lower lip, the words burst from him: "Everything was in league against her. . . . There was no further escape . . . all her tormentors were close upon her . . . the measure was full . . . no one had any insight, no one had any pity . . . that was why she had to send for Waremmé. . . . Well, he needed only to press the switch at a distance . . . I, my God . . . too late . . . too late!"

He stopped, deathly white with the horror of it, swayed, and steadied himself against the wall. Herr von Andergast went up to him with the same leaden heaviness and caught his eyes. They gazed at each other steadily for fully twenty seconds.

Maurizius raised his hand; timidly, defensively. Herr von Andergast saw that the finger-nails were bitten short. This was obviously a result of solitude and lonely brooding. "From whom did she get the revolver?" he whispered hoarsely. Maurizius

started.—“Why do you suppose I saw anything?” he exclaimed wildly: “I saw nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing . . . that’s just it . . . nothing. . . .” Herr von Andergast bowed his head resignedly. “That’s just it . . . nothing, nothing,” repeated Maurizius, with a gesture of hopelessness.—“And you? You yourself? Did you or did you not possess a revolver?” continued Herr von Andergast in his dry, imperturbable voice. Maurizius uttered a short laugh. “This is another age,” he replied enigmatically, “I am no longer twenty-six; I am forty-five.” As he spoke, his eyelids suddenly twitched, just as they had in the court-room nineteen years ago. Again they gazed into one another’s eyes. “Very well; I shall make a note of it,” continued Herr von Andergast, with the curious feeling that something in his spine was grating.

Maurizius looked on listlessly, as Herr von Andergast took his hat, and signalled to the warder, and left the cell. A second warder appeared, with a tin basin. It contained the midday dinner of Convict No. 357. A thick cabbage soup, with a few shreds of meat floating in it, like dark tree-roots on a yellow pool.

CHAPTER XIII

I

CONVERSATIONS between two persons who have to make some decisive settlement seldom follow the course which the two parties have imagined or intended; least of all when they propose a so-called settlement of accounts. Sophia von Andergast, at all events, cherished quite definite expectations as a result of the meeting with her divorced husband. That the conversation followed a somewhat different course from that which she had anticipated in her passionate excitement was due simply to the fact that the man by whom she found herself confronted was no longer the man whom she had known. The impatience with which she entered the *Generalin's* house was so automatic that she stared at the old lady uncomprehendingly when the latter told her that the attorney-general had left town, and that she had not been able to discover when he would return. Not until noon of the following day did they learn, on ringing up his office, that he would be back in town towards the evening. Sophia had spent a sleepless night, and about four in the morning she had left her bed and gone into the garden. When the old lady had her called for breakfast at eight o'clock, they searched the whole house for her, and finally found her on a bench in the summer-house, her arms crossed over the back of the bench, and her face between her elbows. It was with difficulty that she was persuaded to take a cup of tea, and for the reproaches of the old lady, who became almost convulsively talkative, she had only a forced, impersonal smile. The *Generalin* found none of the frankness and affection which she felt she had a right to demand; she had at first to hold herself in check, and constantly to remind herself: She is not merely an unhappy woman. She is the mother of my Etzel. I did not ask her here in order to have a pleasant time with her, but because at last something is going to happen; there can't be any question of enjoying her visit. Yet under her usual urbanity was her selfish little egoism, and in spite of their mutual anxieties she wished, quite modestly, that Sophia would pay court to her

a little. But Sophia showed merely an equable politeness, which irritated the old lady, who began diligently to add up everything that she disliked about the new arrival: a certain taciturnity and reserve, a firm and decided bearing, and, last but not least, the neatness of her person: even in her morning dress she looked as though she had just stepped out of a band-box. The *Generalin* argued to herself: she takes very good care of herself; that certainly isn't consistent with so much trouble and suffering; as though trouble and suffering must express themselves outwardly by slovenliness. But it was rather naïveté than pettiness which made the old lady criticize these things. She had probably pictured to herself the touching figure of a *mère prodigue*, a Niobe bowed with grief, instead of which she found herself dealing with a woman whose character was not easily fathomed, a woman of a curiously reserved spirit, silent, cool, and supple, whose features had remained surprisingly youthful. One would have taken her for thirty-two at the utmost, whereas the widow had calculated that she must already be thirty-eight. But all these disparaging judgments were only bubbles in the old lady's mind; beneath them there was something deeper; there was jealousy. That Sophia looked so unexpectedly young; that she had such charming manners, such perfect teeth, and such a slender figure; that Etzel's heart would go out joyfully to her—if she knew her Etzel—this hurt her and gave her some bad moments.

She had decided to talk as little as possible about Etzel; in the beginning, at all events. This decision was founded on an impulse of jealousy, although she herself believed that it was intended to save Sophia, to distress her as little as possible. But after lunch, when she had gone into the drawing-room with her guest, her tongue ran away with her. On the one hand, it did not seem decent to her to keep what she knew from Sophia; on the other hand, she was rather elated by her knowledge and impatient to display it, as a proof of her care and thoroughness, so to speak. For she had sought out Dr. Camill Raff, on her own responsibility; shortly before his removal to the place to which he had been transferred she had had an exhaustive conversation with him

about Etzel. She had learned some important facts from this talk with him, and when she combined these facts with what she herself had learned of the boy, above all with his last visit and his vehement demand for money, a certain amount of light was thrown on the course which he might have followed, although it did not make his behaviour any less distressing and unusual. If only he had given some sign of life! She would not have betrayed him; she would have respected and kept his secret; of course she would have done so if he had set his heart on it; but simply to disappear like this . . . to leave his people at home eating their hearts out with worry and anxiety. . . . The widow spoke considerably of "his people", but she meant herself alone. Sophia had listened silently and with keen attention. She was still silent when the old lady had finished. Only a light in the big brown eyes betrayed her secret sympathy. The widow hesitated a moment; it was the same light, the same golden-brown glow that shone in "his" eyes; there was no doubt about it, he had that from her; and suddenly her foolish jealousy disappeared, and she felt an intense sympathy for the woman. Sophia breathed a sigh: "So that's what he's like." She had never been what is called a passionate mother; that is, she had never made a show of her love, and at the time when she had still been with her son she had set a great value on a light touch in their intercourse. Always ready to laugh and play with him, she had carefully avoided oppressing him with the selfish tenderness which might have involved him prematurely in the perplexing world of the emotions. Perhaps Herr von Andergast had only tried in his own way—and what a cold, bloodless, intellectual way it was!—to complete what she had begun out of the fullness of a rich nature. It was conceivable that in this very connection he had detected in himself a mysterious dependence, which, of course, he would never have admitted, whether to himself or to another; and he had, after all, accomplished nothing; for when the revelation of the heart is lacking what is left but pedagogical experiments?—and these had pitifully failed. When Sophia had been forced to part from her son no one had heard so much as a complaint from her, much less

any expression of despair; people had even spoken of this openly, and had said that she was incapable of any profound feeling. Now it was a peculiarity of hers that she could live with a cherished image in her heart as though it were a being of flesh and blood; at all events, she had had, up to the present day, a sense of active association; during all these years she had felt as though she were educating the boy from afar, to be her ally. Miraculous forces were at work here which had nothing in common with a set purpose. Hence her exclamation of relief: "So that is what he is like." Hence the light, like Etzel's, in her eye.

2

Towards evening she went out into the city. Wandering slowly through the streets, she suffered under the constant opposition of the homelike and the hostile; these recollections were bright and melodious; those melancholy and oppressive. The newly-painted old houses in the suburbs impressed her as being in some way deceitful, but before the Römerkirche she stood still, gazing up at the façade as one gazes into a revered face. With her eyes on the ground, as though following a trail, she reached the Kettenhofweg and stood before the Andergast house. Her eyes wandered over the windows of the second storey; they were all dark. This darkness meant absence; the absence of the two human beings who, in her mind, were as far apart as torment and felicity, and whom she was forced to picture as side by side, as one must picture father and son. If she could go up now, and confront the man whom she had come to call to account, what words would she use, what sentence would she pass if it were possible now, now, in this moment of fulfilment, when she realized her despoiled life as it were in a single breath; how would he stand before her when she cried into his face: Where is my child? Give me back my son? But this dramatic moment is always only a product of the imagination. It crumbles to dust against the reality. For on the other side, of course, there is also a human being, the most comprehensible creature in the world

when one *thinks* of him, but the most unexpected, confusing, and paralysing when he *appears*.

But in that "moment of fulfilment" all that she had experienced in ten years was epitomized, as is the ocean in a drop of water. How she had wandered from hotel to hotel, from city to city. There was no one to whom she could go; no place to take refuge in, no consolation, no home, no help anywhere. Coldly and silently she had accepted the instructions of the man up there; she had signed the deed; her future had been dictated by him; she had no longer any rights, but only as much freedom as he permitted her, as much money as was left of her inheritance from her parents. She had been ill; she had often been ill, and had never called in or visited a doctor. During the war she had lived in Switzerland, a restless place of refuge amidst the conflagrations of the war; she had lived in cheap pensions among commonplace people, and had managed to remain inconspicuous, to avoid exciting any unwelcome interest. She had studied botany and mineralogy; she had injured her sight with art embroidery; she had walked much, often beyond her physical strength, and had found it difficult to become accustomed to her loneliness, although she could not live with other people. In spite of the most varied intellectual interests, and an unbroken longing for life, her heart was empty; the life she led was utterly joyless; she could laugh and amuse herself, but only among indifferent people; as soon as anyone, man or woman, began a more confidential intercourse her whole demeanour changed, and she quietly broke off the relationship. She could no longer really believe in anything; her relation to the outer world was shaken in every sense; of recent years she had been on terms of friendship with only two persons: a Swiss painter, who had buried himself in the Valais, and an old scholar, M. André Lévy, a professor at the Sorbonne and a famous bacteriologist, whom she had met in Geneva, and whose house in Paris she had often visited. I have spoken of her unbroken longing for life; nevertheless, she had a feeling of relief every evening when the day was over, and every morning when the night had gone by; for it is precisely those who are unhappy

who feel a sense of obligation from day to day which is stronger than their sense of obligation towards life itself.

Just twenty-four hours after that "moment of fulfilment", she entered the Andergast house. The *Generalin* had arranged the interview with Wolf von Andergast by telephone. To return to the house where one has experienced the irrevocable is less a test of memory for the heart than for the eye. Most people, it seems, even when their emotions have become dulled or have died entirely, have a certain repository for them from which they can at any time bring them forth, if they should require them for spectral stage properties; whereas rooms and objects gradually fade away to nothing, and when seen again are so surprising that it is only then that such people become aware of the connection between their former and their present individuality. It is as though one had for a time covered a terrifying picture with one's hand, in order to lessen its distressing effect. This of course was not the case with Sophia; her heart and mind had retained their fires undiminished through the ten years of her absence; nevertheless, the objective and visible things with which she was suddenly surrounded oppressed her; above all, they annihilated time, making the idea of growing older, and of having grown older, an incomprehensible deception of nature; for everything was just as it always had been, whether ten years or a week ago; the difference was imaginary. There was the tread of the third step on the second flight, which always used to creak when one stepped on it; there was the place above the window on the staircase where the red-brown paint had faded into yellow. She had clung tremblingly to this brass door-knob on a certain day when she had heard that the man she loved had shot himself in the temple, and she did not know whether she had the strength to go to the house where his body lay. How often had she seen the china name-plate with the name "Dr. Malapert, Oculist" written in flourishing letters; how hopelessly often had she pressed the bell-push on the second storey, and with what reluctance had she waited for the door of her own flat to open. Now she was standing there again, was pressing the button once

more; the door was opened for her to enter; the mirror was still hanging there, reflecting her image as though it had not missed a single day. There on its peg hung the silk hat, the symbol of something revoltingly official and ceremonious; beneath it the coat, to which the nauseating smell of stale cigar-smoke clung as always; and on the opposite wall was the portrait of the old emperor with his parted beard and his affable expression. Here was the door through which she had passed that last night, after the last tearless farewell to the sleepy boy (she had never wept easily), and there too was that other door, covered with a *portière*, which she had never opened without the feeling: if only it were already over, and I were outside again!

3

At seven o'clock Herr von Andergast said to Rie: "There will be a lady here at half-past seven; it is not necessary to announce her." Rie nodded knowingly. The widow's Nanny had not failed to inform her of the identity of the lady who was staying with them. She regarded herself as the victim of a nebulous conspiracy. She gave the cook wrong instructions, and in her nervousness she dropped a pot of marmalade on the tiled kitchen floor; she stood there dolefully, thinking: Everything's going to smash. "Do you remember, the autumn before last," she said, "the same thing happened, and our boy knelt down and wanted to lick it up off the floor?" The cook pretended to remember; yes, she had been surprised, because the boy was not usually so greedy. "Would to God he had been," said Rie; "then we should still have him with us; a sweet-tooth is attached to his home." At that moment the door-bell rang; the housemaid opened the door; Rie stepped silently into the passage, and saw a woman of medium height, not particularly slender, walking with a resolute step towards the study; and her hostile thought was: she still seems to know her way about here; as though this circumstance were a proof of her wickedness. She had never before had such a tremendous desire to listen at a door; it was only her innate sense of decency that restrained her. For a while she stood where she was, listening; then, as all was silent, she went back to her room disappointed.

At half-past five Herr von Andergast had come home and had ordered tea, but had not touched his cup; he had walked noiselessly up and down the room all the time. It was impossible for him to get the voice of the convict Maurizius out of his ears. Whatever he did or thought, it pursued him, like the persistent cooing of an invisible dove. Sometimes a fragment of a sentence would emerge from this unmodulated cooing; then he would start, halt in his walk, turn his head, knit his brows, and murmur aloud to himself. He had lighted more than a dozen cigarettes, one after the other, but had thrown them all into the ash-tray after two or three puffs. Now and again he pressed his hands to his forehead, as he had seen Maurizius do, and his face assumed an expression of frozen brooding. A swarm of questions stormed through his brain, like a whirling eddy of snowflakes, and he could not linger over any of them. From time to time he pulled out his watch, and assured himself uneasily that the time was passing, as though everything depended on his finding some formula before the moment when he would no longer be alone. But he could not still the feverish whirl of his thoughts, and the hands of his watch crept on. Only the cooing, that ceaseless cooing. At last, out of the chaos the following tangible question emerged: Why did he not say it at the time? Why—since his admissions bore such an unmistakable impress of truth—why, why had he kept silent for nineteen years? He might just as well have made up his mind, three, five, twelve, sixteen years ago as now? What had prevented him? Shame, consideration, defiance, are not emotions which will endure such an ordeal, in which each separate year becomes an eternity, in which even the idea of sacrifice, which evidently played its part, as the fruit of a supreme passion, must share in the general inner decay. (While he was thinking of this “general inner decay”, Herr von Andergast had a feeling of heat and cold round his heart; so he too was infected by the atmosphere of this shadowy human being; he had realized this death-agony of nineteen years; perhaps he had even been affected by it more enduringly than he had assumed.) What prevented him, what was it? He continued to probe into his mind; and a

premonition of comprehension emerged. It may be that it goes very deep, he reflected; it may be that he was conscious that the truth was true for him only, but not for me, not for us; for me and for us it was ripe only at the moment when he was ready, almost against his will, to proclaim it. And a thought suddenly staggered him: What if the truth were only a result of the passage of time? What if I, three, five, twelve, sixteen years ago, was so fettered, so dulled by the passing moment, that I should not have been capable of accepting the truth—this same truth which now seems to me so credible and so simple? *Perhaps the truth comes into being only through time and in the course of time?* The thought was so disconcerting, it threw such a ghastly light on all that he had hitherto called judgment and sentence, that for a few seconds he felt as though the firm nucleus of his personality were disintegrating. In his distress, and as though to save himself from self-dissection, he grasped at the recorded details of the "case", which had already occupied him, like the pieces of a puzzle, during the whole of the drive from Kressa. He wanted to see how far Maurizius's statement agreed with the dates recorded in the documents; he had already considered these points and put them aside again. He had hardly begun to consider them afresh when there was a soft knock at the door, and Sophia entered.

Herr von Andergast remained standing behind his desk, as though behind the wall of a fortress. It was one of those situations in which even a formal greeting is absurd. He had not seen this woman for nearly ten years. It had not once occurred to him, during these ten years, to examine his feelings towards her. A matter which had been settled had no further claim on the days that passed in their ordered sequence. The ability to dispose of matters—to close an incident—was as prominent in his private as in his public life. There was a set time for paying off arrears in both spheres of life, and when the time had passed the matter was dismissed. The woman had closed the door behind her, and was standing some five steps away from him, but he did not see her; that is, he did not wish to⁹ see her; he was not at all curious. His slightly inflamed eyelids were lowered; his

powerful body swayed a little. He waited. "I am sufficiently prepared; how can I be of service to you?" his icily distant manner implied. But there was a transparent pallor round his nose. Sophia walked over to the leather chair which stood in the half-shadow of the bookcase, and sat down in silence. She looked at the man with her mysterious eyes. The corners of her lips quivered bitterly and menacingly. It seemed as though she meant to compel him to speak first. She knew his obstinacy and felt, as of old, a contempt for an attitude which she knew to be only the sterile pursuance of a "line of conduct". But she soon realized her mistake; with her sharpened instinct it was soon evident to her that there had been a change in this man; it seemed as though nothing were left of his stony impassivity and his assumption of omnipotence but the bearing, the glance, the gesture, the intact rind of an empty fruit. This perception did not soften her; nothing could conciliate her; but neither did it give her any satisfaction. It did not interest her. He was not in her eyes a person about whom one thinks. The place which he had once occupied in her life (almost exclusively in a destructive sense) no longer existed. She had undertaken the journey hither in an outburst of accumulated resolution; her former solicitor, with whom she corresponded from time to time on matters of business, had informed her of Etzel's flight. (The two letters which she had addressed to Herr von Andergast in March and April, in which she had insisted that the existing state of affairs must be altered, since her alleged free renunciation had been extorted from her, and was therefore an untenable and improper measure, had been written with her solicitor's knowledge. No answer had been vouchsafed to either letter, and when she had informed her legal friend of the fact she had added: "It was an unpardonable error to appeal to one who does not understand the human language.") The news, and the fact that they had not been able to find the boy, had forced her to cast off all restraint, and had made her indifferent to the consequences of a step which, if closely considered, was of little practical use. She wanted to act; at least she wanted to show that the old intimidating fear no longer existed. Now she sat there in

silence, as though suffocating, just as she had sat there when the admission of her guilt had been forced from her after George Hofer's suicide, and the senseless document had been presented to her for her signature by the man who, under the mask of the judge, had unscrupulously exploited her guilt and indulged his lust of vengeance.

There ensued a dialogue which can hardly be reproduced. It was dragged down by its own weight; it departed from all conventional formalities; it lost itself in the depths where two souls stood confronted, disembodied, as it were, in their constitutional hostility; it was full of allusions, innuendoes, pauses and colloquial abbreviations. Sometimes one answered the other speaker only by a silence which was clearer than any argument; interrupted trains of thought were uttered, a shrug of the shoulders told a whole story; the air of the room was laden with vibrations which acted directly on the nerves of the two antagonists. Herr von Andergast began by saying that he unfortunately had not had the advantage of being informed as to the object of this visit, although he could guess its purpose; an insipid formula, and the tone in which he spoke was that which he employed in addressing a litigant during a consultation. After mature consideration of the admissibility or inadmissibility of such an interview, he had decided in favour of the former. Nevertheless . . . and there followed a shrug of the shoulders, as though this were the end of his wisdom. Sophia stood up with a jerk. What an insolent red-tape majesty, she thought, angrily. Then she smiled, and sat down again.

The occasion to which he had alluded, he continued a shade more politely, thinking that he had emphasized his point of view with sufficient clearness by this introduction, could not, however, compel him to consent to any explanation or discussion; now, as formerly, he could not recognize any demands of that nature.

"Oh, really?" The words came like the call of a bird from Sophia's chair. Disagreeably impressed, Herr von Andergast looked in that direction. "That is so," he corroborated coldly. Sophia leaned back and crossed her arms over her bosom. "A

vain hope," she said indifferently; "there will be no demands made, so thou wilt not be in a position to dispute them." Herr von Andergast lifted his eyebrows interrogatively. "Then I understand still less your wish for this interview," the restrained irritation of his expression seemed to say. The first "thou" from the woman's mouth had been a shock to him, although it was impossible to see how it could be permanently avoided. He took up the seal which lay beside the ink-well, weighed it in his hand, and looked at it attentively. His thoughts were moving in two concentric circles. The one embraced everything relating to the convict Maurizius; it filled a region of his brain which had been worn till it was sore; he had the feeling that he had left the cell too soon, losing the most important revelations. I must make up for that, he told himself; there are points which have still to be cleared up. In his mind he reconstructed the scene of the murder; he reconsidered again and again the circumstance of the revolver which had disappeared; he calculated how much time Waremmé must have taken to go from the club to the garden gate, and found a suspicious difference of one and a half to two minutes. He remembered that night had fallen, and that it was a foggy October evening, and reproached the prosecution with having attached too much importance to the evidence of the chance witness (the same old mistake, as he resignedly admitted). He measured in his mind the distance from the gate to the front door of the house, where Anna Jahn had been standing—thirty-five yards—and reflected that Waremmé must have run past Maurizius if the latter really did not fire the shot, and had probably then turned round and faced Maurizius, with the revolver in his hand, which he had picked up from the ground. All this he pondered, deciding that he must go to see the convict again, and that without delay, in order to induce him to give certain final explanations. All this while he was evading the fact that it was the personality of Maurizius himself which had attracted him and held him breathless as no one had ever done before; and at the same time he was anxiously evading the only possible deduction, namely, that Waremmé must have perjured himself. To say this clearly to

himself was beyond his power; but it took an enormous effort of will to keep it from emerging into consciousness.

Thus all these tormenting visions remained in the one circle, impinging from time to time upon the other, in which Sophia was visible, and in which, despite his resolve not to think of the boy in connection with her, Etzel invisibly stood. Although he evoked the impression that he had not as yet really looked at Sophia at all, his furtive, observing glance had long ago taken her in. The red-brown hair still had the same slightly golden tinge; the charming oval of her cheeks had not essentially changed; her eyebrows were still as characteristically arched, giving her face the expression of a constant, rather short-sighted curiosity, which had so often made him impatient; her throat was hardly lined; her bearing betrayed nothing of her grievous fate, nothing of her illnesses, nothing of the path of expiation which she should have trodden; no regret, no humility, no gesture of pleading; no marks of oppression, no sign of need or abandonment; none of those things which one expected, and would gladly have seen; but rather freedom, moderation, circumspection. How could that be? There was something wrong here. Was this the result of the punishment inflicted? Where then was the sense of the punishment? This calm countenance, this superior silence, this self-sufficient smile (so it seemed to him, but actually it was a painful smile, just as the whole inner life of the woman was expressed in certain psychical traces round her mouth). Far more startling was her resemblance to Etzel, the mere way in which she sat there, the tense suspicious glance, secretive and constantly on the defensive, the mixture of childishness and irritating maturity in the features, the eagerness for knowledge and . . . the craftiness even; it was extraordinarily conspicuous, uncanny almost. This was something for which he had not been prepared; it would perhaps oblige him to revise his tactics, to be stricter than he had been, to take measures to prevent the dreaded and evidently dangerous similarity between these two similar characters from developing.

And Sophia?

4

The matter with her stood simply thus: when the distant alarm had reached her she had naturally thought of some disastrous quarrel between the father and son. She had supposed that this had been caused, on the one side, by the arbitrary despotism of Herr von Andergast, his coldness, and his habit of subjecting those who were dependent on him to an unrelenting discipline, which required their silent obedience, and on the other side by the natural revolt of a young spirit thirsting for independence of thought and action, and therefore grasping at the first available pretext for discarding an intolerable yoke. She had imagined stormy scenes and an open rupture; she had supposed that the flight had been aimless and unpremeditated, an act of despair, and that after a period of adventurous wandering it must end either in return and punishment, or in collapse. What the *Generalin* had told her had shown her the matter in a different light, and had confirmed the consoling confidence, based on mysterious psychical communications, which had only been obscured by these tremulous images of terror. But she had still had her doubts. The interview with her husband had satisfied these. As sensitive as a seismograph to the secret emotions of others, she recognized the indications of a catastrophe in Herr von Andergast's unrest, in the sudden kindling and fading of his glance, and in his nervous vigilance, which was mingled with an absent-mindedness bordering upon distraction. What had occurred was something far more significant than the mere truancy of a half-grown boy who had rebelled against the paternal rule. Even had it occurred on her account (and it might be imagined that the crime committed against his mother had not remained unknown to the boy, and that he had left his father for that reason, in the secret hope of joining her), even then she would not have felt the satisfaction which she now enjoyed. Its "meaning" was of a higher nature; the reprisal was more effective. Who would have dared to hope just such a thing as this, or to foretell it? She smiled. It was a smile not of triumph, but rather of surprise, as though she could not

quite believe this wonderful thing. Then she said, fearlessly: "The demands which I might make no longer have any meaning, only you do not realize it."—"How is that?" asked Herr von Andergast with a feeble attempt to appear interested, returning the seal to its place.—"That is, you do realize it very well; you are only maintaining an artificial ignorance," continued Sophia. "How could anyone like yourself fail to know when he has been stricken to the heart and thrown out of the orbit of his life?"—"May I permit myself to say that your remarks are utterly incomprehensible?"—"Certainly. I have no particular ambition to be comprehensible. But the matter is not especially obscure."—"I am all attention."—"You do not imagine that this is merely a temporary interruption of the relations between your son and yourself? The boy will come back when he has achieved his purpose, or when he is convinced that he cannot attain it. He will come back, without a doubt, but not to you. Never again to you." Herr von Andergast laughed drily, but with some uneasiness. "I should imagine that arrangements and precautions might be devised," he replied.—"Compulsory precautions and compulsory arrangements. Yes, but that is not the way to win back a soul."—"I do not place any value upon the soul."—"I know that. So you will try to exorcise the soul. You have obtained brilliant results in this way."—"I shall do what duty demands."—"Of course. Duty is a stern master. And what does duty prescribe? Imprisonment."—"I refuse to discuss the matter in these terms."—"These terms, my God!" said Sophia, pityingly; "I can't discuss the matter with you like one of the automatons in your office, considering what is at stake."—"Namely?"—"I have not come to demand anything, but rather to prevent something."—"And what is that?"—"If you did not understand so well, you would not ask so bluntly."—"You seem to fear, after all, that I am not so powerless in regard to future developments as you wished in the beginning to make me believe?"—"Who would doubt your perspicacity? It is the best thing about you. Powerless? No. I do not regard you as powerless. You will never be that. Unfortunately. You are to be pitied for that reason. When one is powerless, one

often discovers one's real strength. You have spent yours on a lifeless mechanism. Don't drive it to the point of absurdity. The boy is lost to you for good and all."

For a moment it seemed as though Herr von Andergast longed to throw off the armour which made him impregnable; the violet-blue eyes flashed menacingly; the transparent pallor about his nostrils spread over his face. But he remained silent. The woman is forgetting herself; the woman is becoming decidedly too personal, he thought angrily. Still, he held his peace. He walked over to the brown tile stove, and leaned against it in the attitude of a man who with silent contempt repudiates the idea that his person might be made the object of psychological subtleties. Sophia's voice was not raised above its conversational tone as she continued: "One day his eyes were bound to open. It had to become plain to him who his father is. After all, he is my son. You will hardly deny that he is my son, will you? Of course, I hadn't a correct idea of the boy. A curious admission for a mother, is it not? But at least I have not waited in vain all these years; I have done nothing but wait. Your calculation was false. Even if the soul means nothing to you, as you say, it has proved to you that one can't do violence to it. The spiritual antagonist. It's astonishing to think how systematically you've brought him up to this. Your mother told me . . . if one puts everything together one gets a clear picture. You probably don't remember that I could never believe in Maurizius's guilt. You, of course, did not deign to take any notice of what a girl of eighteen thought and felt . . . *mon Dieu, cela ne tire pas à conséquences*. We came to know one another thoroughly on the day on which sentence was passed and you told me about it with a beaming countenance. I shuddered through and through. I can still hear the tones in which you uttered the words: 'I have got my verdict,' as though they were a message from heaven. When I announced our engagement to my father—he was taking a cure in Nauheim, three weeks before his death—he wrote me a letter all about the innocence of Maurizius, and about you, as the counsel for the prosecution. He, the student of jurisprudence,

was deeply concerned; for him the law was not engraven on Mosaic tablets. He was greatly troubled about our engagement. It's curious. Nothing is lost in the world; the scattered seed fell into the heart of my child, and grew into a tree from which he plucked the fruit of knowledge. In your eyes justice and the law are institutions which are proof against human criticism. I dreamed once that a vast crowd of people grovelled on their knees before you, begging you to revoke a decree, but you stood like a pillar of stone. A ghastly delusion to imagine that one could be infallible; an infallible judge. To be unable to make mistakes; what a curse! You took my child from me; yes, *my* child; a mother *possesses*; perhaps of all people in the world she alone *possesses*; but I am not complaining, and I am not accusing you. How do they put it in your legal terminology?—I am recapitulating. You stole him from me. Let me finish; the word exactly expresses the fact—you stole him from me at an age when you might hope to mould him entirely according to your own ideas, in your own likeness; he was clay in your strong hands. You based your behaviour upon law and justice, regarding them as trusty satellites; and truly they have served you well. Then the human being who was lawfully seized grows up, and what happens? He destroys your foundations and shatters your delusion; law and justice desert you. No dialectics can dispute that. I need only to look at you to see that it is so. Up to an hour ago I had no conception of it, no conception that. . . .” She sprang up and took two steps towards Herr von Andergast, and with her right hand clenched on the open palm of her left hand, she asked, in a curiously glad voice, in which no excitement could be detected: “Shall I tell you what else has happened?” Herr von Andergast raised his arm with his finger outstretched commandingly. It was the gesture of the public prosecutor; at this moment it had an uncanny and spectral quality. “I will forgo that,” he said hastily, “we have no need to go into that; I forbid any further references to the matter.” Sophia replied sarcastically: “I understand; you will not allow me to continue; but you are only depriving yourself.” She took another step forward and smiled, a curiously passionate,

almost ecstatic smile, whispering, with uplifted face: "But where is he, where is he? He must come soon. I do so want at last to see him. . . ." Herr von Andergast bowed his head. For a time he was utterly still, until the word perjury fell upon his ear, making him wince.

5

Sophia had turned away and was walking up and down the narrow room, between the desk and the bookcase, looking, as one often does in moments of tense but suppressed emotion, with apparent curiosity at various objects in the room—the barometer near the window, a bronze figure in a corner, the title of a book. Then she began to speak, in the same light, conversational tone as before, and with rapid gestures, and whenever she turned or stood still there was a tilt to her nose as though she were following a scent. What she said produced the impression that she wished, by her ruthless exposure of the past, to hint at her equally ruthless determination as to the shaping of the future. More than ever she revealed the unwonted audacity of a woman who is capable of thinking, who has learned to think, and who does not shrink from any of the consequences of her thinking. This was as perturbingly new to Herr von Andergast as though the stove behind him had turned into a human being and proceeded to take part in the conversation. Once again there rose before him that terrible "too late", which, since Etzel's flight, had made his sleepless nights so intolerably long. It grinned at him from every wall, at home, in the office, in the street, everywhere, everywhere: too late, too late, too late. . . .

She did not hesitate to speak in a matter-of-fact way of her transgression. "When I was unfaithful to you . . ." she said. She described her adultery as an unsuccessful attempt to escape from a dungeon. "I was a free human being up to my twentieth year," she said. "From the day of my marriage I was condemned to seclusion." She remarked, not without a slight shudder: "One becomes a mother as one is struck by lightning. In accordance with law and justice." Then: "What did my life consist in?

What did my marriage consist in? A husband, a combination of a sex and a profession; sex at night, the profession by day; a more and more dismal mixture of the two as use and wont made him more sure of himself. He had not even enough humanity to consider now and again why the sequestered creature at his side was so persistently silent, why at most she said Yes or No, and was polite and docile, and dressed herself well, and for the rest was going to the dogs. He was the master, the husband, the father, the breadwinner. All very thorough, all very conscientious, in accordance with law and justice. What more could one's heart desire? Yes, but the heart, even when it need not have been ashamed to love, refused to love. Contrary to law and justice. And in its hunger and its helplessness it felt that it must love . . . anyone, at any cost, if only to test itself, if only to know that it did not exist for nothing, merely for the kitchen, the cellar, the bedroom and the nursery; and so it was ready to give itself to the first person who wanted it, if only he was half acceptable. Again, contrary to law and justice. Love . . . well, we'll call it love. Many a passion springs only from the fear of emptiness. And such passions are the maddest. Georg Hofer was no hero. A talented, average man, decent and generous. If he had been more than that he would have scorned your prejudices; he would not have sworn the oath which was intended to save me and which was to cost him his life. Perjury! That nightmare drove him to his death. No, he was not a strong man; he was completely permeated by the conceptions of honour of his caste, and quite convinced by your law and justice, which always seemed to me like the skull and cross-bones which one sticks on poison-bottles as a warning. When you compelled him to take that oath you already had my confession, and you knew that you would destroy him with it—in accordance with law and justice—and you forced me to confess with the lie that I should thereby free him from his oath! Perjury . . . a useful tool, one way or another; sometimes one uses and ignores it; sometimes one condemns and persecutes; the end justifies the means. Why, you live in a world of perjury. But the perjury with which you caught him and me is a black spot in your

life which you cannot extirpate, even if you should live like a repentant monk for the rest of your life; you can't wash it out, you can't cover it up. I have often asked myself how one gets over such a thing; I suppose by not looking at it; you have the most extraordinary power of persistently refusing to see a thing."

"Yes, perjury," said Herr von Andergast tonelessly, his yellow face standing out in the darkness above his bowed body. "Yes, he must, of course, have committed perjury." Sophia looked at him in astonishment. She did not, of course, know what internal disquiet had evoked this exclamation. She stood still and gazed at him searchingly. Then he said, brokenly: "It is not good to bring up those old stories. It is not good . . . Sophia. Especially not now; there are reasons. You are a woman; it's true that you, perhaps, understand more than others, but that . . . no. You women, recently, have been making an appeal for which we are not prepared. There are criticisms which you make because you have the time, a great deal of time, and know nothing of the imperative *must* and *ought*. If I were what I *could* be, I should be with even higher justice against you. Nevertheless" . . . (he interrupted himself with a sigh) "Consider that to-day almost every man approaching fifty is bankrupt in his life's ideal. I am, unfortunately, no exception to the rule."

Sophia stood with her long-lashed eyelids lowered. "Take your hands off the boy," she replied. And he, with a resumption of all his former stiffness, replied: "I cannot see with what right . . ." Sophia interrupted him with an impatient gesture: "Right, right . . . I have paid the price."—"I too have had nothing without paying for it." As she was silent, he looked at her, and suddenly he knew the price which she had paid. There are women who, after a lifetime of voluntary deprivation, dictated by an all-devouring purpose, achieve a second virginity. He looked at her; she smiled; it was a little smile, full of silent power. Suddenly she bowed to him, proudly aloof, and walked to the door, pulling her glove over her left hand as she went. Herr von Andergast dropped into the chair that stood at his writing-table, leaned his elbows on the edge of the table, and pressed his hands over his

face. He sat thus for two hours, and did not hear Rie's repeated and hesitating knocks. At last, about eleven o'clock, she anxiously decided to open the door, and to whisper through the crack that his cold supper was waiting for him. She was, after all, partly reconciled to his wife's visit, for when Sophia, on leaving the room, had seen Rie standing in the hall, she had gone up to her and had silently pressed her hand.

6

By seven o'clock in the morning Herr von Andergast was already on his way back to Kressa. What did he wish to do there? What did he anticipate? What drew him thither so impatiently that his car seemed to creep along as slowly as a post-chaise, while he regarded every obstacle, every delay, with embittered exasperation? Further interrogations, further questions?—there was no sense in these. The police-court details which he had believed even yesterday to be so significant had ceased to have any meaning. They could add nothing to the picture, they could take nothing from it. What then was urging him on? He avoided asking himself the plain question. To examine this kind of uneasiness more closely, as though . . . why, it was laughable! . . . as though one had once more to see a friend before coming to some urgent decision which would have led one into precarious bypaths. A friend? . . . the convict? A friend? His head was bad; perhaps that was the explanation of these vagaries. Overwork. The strain, and the reaction after his unpleasant experiences; this trouble with his wife, the anxiety about the boy. In his eagerness to deny that either trouble was of real importance, in determining *not* to think of them, *not* to allow them to cause him suffering, in denying any responsibility, he was, perhaps (he told himself), as a sort of internal counter-demonstration, attributing an illusory importance to the Maurizius incident. (A refinement of self-observation which did credit to his intellect.) At the same time, whatever it was that was drawing him to the convict, it was of a similar nature to that which made him long for his boy; he was not in this case affronted and depressed, as though the best in him had

been misjudged; here something more obscure was at work; it was as though he had to propitiate destiny; but the barriers were so strong that one could not break through them. (These absolutely joyless men of his type and generation, who know friendship only from the faded reminiscences of their boyhood, become aware of their complete isolation only quite late in life. It sometimes happens then—as with many women during the climacteric—that they seek to obtain what they have lost by resorting to actions which are equivalent to a reversal of the character which has hitherto been theirs.) He had a confused idea that he must discuss matters, must come to an understanding; what was more (though he knew only too well that he would fail) he must try to manage to understand himself; at the same time he fought against the compulsion, shrugging his shoulders at himself, and thinking of plausible pretexts to explain the necessity of a further visit. This, however, did not prevent him from constantly hearing the gentle voice in his ear, seeing before him the broken gestures, the fluttering glance of the prisoner, the beautifully chiselled lips that reminded one of Napoleon's, the small feminine teeth, the snow-white hair. And in addition to all this there was the feeling, of which he had already been conscious at their first interview, that here was a man entrusted with the mission of telling the world secrets of which it had hitherto had not an inkling.

Shortly before reaching Kressa they were delayed by the rain; the chauffeur was obliged to put up the top. And in the office he had to wait a quarter of an hour while the superintendent was informed; he was calling the roll. When Pauli appeared he told Herr von Andergast that the prisoner had been taken ill during the night. They had allowed him to remain in his cell, as he had wished, instead of removing him to the hospital. It was, according to the doctor, only a slight indisposition; indigestion, or something of the sort; after taking some bicarbonate of soda the patient felt quite all right; the Baron could very well talk to him. The clerk with the excited look in his eyes rose and zealously submitted the doctor's bulletin. Ten minutes later—the prison clock was striking nine—the warder unlocked the door of the cell.

Maurizius was lying on his iron bedstead, covered up to the chest with a heavy grey blanket. His face was a chalky white; his eyes were floating like two lumps of coal in their dark-ringed orbits. At the sight of the attorney-general he sat up suddenly with an expression which seemed to say: What, again! Haven't you had enough yet? Over his rough shirt he wore a tunic of ticking, unbuttoned at the throat. Herr von Andergast went over to him, looking down on him from his imposing height, with a frown of dismay on his forehead, and suddenly held out both his hands to him. While he waited for the gesture to be returned (which it was not) his big teeth gleamed between his lips, which had a puffy, swollen look. One might have thought that the white face of the prisoner could not grow any whiter, but it did so. He stared at his visitor. What does that mean? his angry, startled glance seemed to ask: why do you do that—what's at the back of it? The characteristic distrust of the long-term convict. Herr von Andergast let his arms fall. For a while he stood sunk in thought. Then he walked over to the window and looked out at the swaths of rain that were falling like a fine silken warp; he took the wooden chair, placed it beside the bed, and dropped heavily into it. Pressing his finger-tips together, he said, thoughtfully: "I should like this time to dispense with all unpleasant inquiries and investigations. So do not be uneasy. I am sorry that your health seems to have suffered from the strain yesterday." Maurizius laid his head, which he had so far held up with strained attention, back on his coarse pillow. "Pooh, health!" he remarked indifferently; and that was all. Herr von Andergast bowed. "One question," he continued, in the completely altered tone which he had to-day assumed in speaking to the prisoner, a tone which said unmistakably: "I am speaking as man to man, as equal to equal," and to which Maurizius listened as though trying, with difficulty, to distinguish one voice amidst the voices of a distant crowd. "One single question. If you prefer not to answer, I shall understand your silence. For it could only have one interpretation." Maurizius gazed into nothingness. "Please go on," he whispered.

"Would you accept your discharge if you were pardoned, without taking any further steps? Your word would suffice me." An electric thrill ran through Maurizius's outstretched body. He pressed his parched lips together. He could not speak. A wild dance of confused images rushed through his brain. He wanted to shout something; he could not. He wanted to cover his face with his hands; he could not. He had the feeling that his body was a lump of lead, and his heart a limping motor about to stop. Herr von Andergast understood. With a curious shyness he laid his hand on Maurizius's arm. "I am offering you," he said, "what it is possible to offer. You still have a future before you. You must not throw it away for the sake of a phantom." Maurizius's face became convulsed. "A phantom? A phantom, you say? A future without this . . . this phantom? A future . . . with what is there"—he pointed to his eyes—"and there"—he slapped his breast with the palm of his hand. "A future!"

Herr von Andergast spoke to him as though he had been an obstinate child: "You must adjust yourself. Life is a mighty force. A stream that sterilizes all filth and poison. Think of freedom." (That's trite, hopelessly trite, he thought, full of anger at the staleness and lifelessness of his words.) Again a quiver ran through the emaciated body of the convict. "Freedom . . . oh yes, my God . . . freedom. . . ." His eyes filled with tears. "Now, you see," said Herr von Andergast, genuinely moved. (He suddenly felt like a benefactor, a real friend. This moved him; he forgot that his gift had not even the dignity of a present; he was not conscious that it was a mockery and a derision.) Maurizius lay there in silence. Five minutes passed and he did not move. At last his lips quivered and he began to speak.

7

"You don't know anything about it. No one in the world can have the remotest conception of it. Everybody's imagination stops at that point like a balky cow. Whatever is said or known outside is utterly inadequate. Some people think they have realized it because they have become familiarized with certain images which

impress their imagination. They have not the faintest notion of it. Others, again, say that it is not so bad, that everyone adjusts himself to circumstances, that habit is everything, that conditions are improving every year, that legislation is yielding to the spirit of the times, and more of that sort. They haven't the faintest notion. All the injustice and suffering of the world are based on the fact that experience cannot be transmitted. At most it can be communicated. Between what is apportioned and what is unbearable there lies the whole path of experience which no man can tread save in solitude. Just as one must always die in solitude; and no one knows anything about death. Not so bad . . . no. For a long time one thinks, not so bad. If one were not intellectually, morally, spiritually, socially ruined as a human being, as a son and father and husband, the rest would really not be so bad. Quiet, as I have already told you; quiet, and peace. No more ambition, no more worry about money, no excitement, no scenes, no newspapers; just order, peace and quiet. Through these walls nothing can reach one. Freedom; one has had enough of that. It is freedom that has brought one where one is. One says to oneself: 'You don't need freedom, it merely makes you unruly, just as one becomes a drunkard if one has a cellar full of wine.' For a long while it's like that. You have heard, of course, of the Spanish water-torture. The victim is laid under a dripping spigot, and at regular intervals drops of water fall on a certain point of the body. At first it is only unpleasant, then it becomes painful, then a horrible torment, and finally every drop feels like a hammer beating on one's head, and skin and flesh and bones become one sodden wound. When I came to this place I thought: 'Not so bad.' Day after day passed, week after week, month after month, and I still thought: 'Not so bad.' There were even moments and hours when the condition of being eternally shut in gave me a sense of internal security, as though nothing further could ever happen to me. You must consider what was behind me. One's mental rigidity has to soften first. Well, then the fog lifted. One day the director said to me: 'You have been in this place fifteen months.' Let me remark in passing that I was never

addressed as 'Du'; always as 'Sie', while the others were addressed as 'Du'; for I was an intellectual, a former doctor of philosophy. Well, that went through me like a fire, that idea of fifteen months. Fifteen months, I thought; where have they gone, where are they? What have I seen or known of them? Ordinarily, that is a period of life which one notices, in a good as well as in a bad sense; outside one feels the passage of time in one's bones and one's finger-tips. . . . I said: 'Director, is it really fifteen months?' He laughed and said: 'Lucky man for whom no hour strikes!' That was the beginning. I mean, of the fear that one's mind will lose its grasp upon living time. This fear became so ghastly that I used to prevent myself from falling asleep at night, in order to hold on to the time, to be aware of the time, as men at the races keep their eyes fastened on the colours of the jockeys, in order not to miss the moment at which the winner passes the post. But that is a false comparison. I can't draw any comparisons; they would all be false, distorted, because they would be in terms of your world outside. This anxiety about the time corroded my nerves, just as though I had had something to lose. Almighty God! What was there for me to lose or to miss . . . with a life-sentence? Just say that to yourself: imprisonment *for life!* What is there to lose then? But the human brain is a crazy affair. After this torture the second was not long in coming. With this anxiety about the time came the torment of simultaneity. That was, if possible, worse. For example, I am standing in the workshop, my hands performing the same endless mechanical function, and it suddenly occurs to me: now, at this moment, the postman Lindenschmitt is going down the Promenadengasse and ringing at the Villa Kosegarten; now, at this moment, Professor Stein and Professor Wenland are meeting at the corner of the university building and putting their heads together because they are carrying on their usual intrigue against Professor Strassmeyer. I see them. I see the postman Lindenschmitt, with his drunkard's nose, fumbling in his leather bag and pulling out the letters. And I see the maid at the Villa Kosegarten putting her head out of the window and shaking her duster before she presses the

knob that releases the latch of the iron gate. I see it because I have seen it a hundred, a thousand times, and because it can hardly have altered. This changes with every hour; in every city I have been to, in the railway-stations, the hotels, the picture galleries and museums, I see whatever is happening at the time, and the people I used to meet there, who were always to be found there, and must be there even now. I see the first waggons rolling through the sleepy streets in the morning, and in the evening I see the first arc lamps lighting up; I see a little bronze statuette in the Cassel museum which I was always fond of, and I think: Strange, strange that it stands there, and I know that it stands there; it is as though I could touch it; but I might as well imagine touching Orion; it is and is not; it is there and it is not there. And so it is with everything; with the trees I know, with little boys I know, and who grow bigger as in a dream, with things that once belonged to me, and concerning which I ask myself where they are now, where they are at this moment, for they must be somewhere. . . . This gave me no rest, no rest, and, like my anxiety about the time, it made the time pass more and more slowly; I was more and more aware of every day; always the passing day, you understand; and when all the separate days were over and were gathered up, it seemed as though some monstrous beast of prey had swallowed them all at a gulp. And just as with the anxiety about the time, so this horrible sense of all that was happening at the moment made everything stretch out in front of one into endless space. I would not believe there were walls here; I would walk up to a wall as though it must open like a stage curtain. Space, space, space everywhere; that I was locked up seemed a stupid jest. But all this was child's play to what followed. . . ."

He turned his head to and fro several times; then he laid his hands, with fingers interlaced, on the top of his head, and continued: "Of course, this misery about the time was the source of all the other miseries; especially . . . well, how shall I explain it? . . . the *if* torture, the *if* and *I had* torture. *If* in this or that situation *I had* done so and so, *if* in this or that conversation *I had* replied this or that, how differently everything would have

turned out. *If* on the twenty-fourth of October *I had* taken the slow train instead of the express, how differently everything would have happened; quite, quite differently; and then I had to imagine *how* it would have been. All the past was rearranged and recomposed as though in delirium. I saw all the absurdities and stupidities, all the hasty decisions and actions, and I realized that one can't turn time back in order to alter things. It would have taken so little to alter everything; it was so simple; it broke one's heart and confused one's brain. Repentance and regret and belated insight: in this person you confided too much; in that person you believed too implicitly; here your suspicion was misplaced; there you should have spoken openly. And all the things one remembers having forgotten. . . . I forgot to write that important letter to Elli, which would have prevented the whole hideous misunderstanding; I forgot to tell Anna—what might perhaps have saved her and my wife and myself—that it was my sacred intention to leave the country, alone, if everything went wrong, making sure only of Hildegard. Twenty times a day one feels as though one could retrieve things and set them straight, and then one realizes how impossible it is, impossible for good and all; and then comes a wild revolt against that impossibility. That is the hardest thing of all to get accustomed to: the fettered will; no, that's stupidly expressed; the fact that one *can't* will any more. One's organ of will is paralysed. For example: the teeth exist for biting; good; you have hardly bitten a piece of bread when a tooth falls out of your mouth, and it's only when all your teeth are gone that you get accustomed to it. That's how it is. The consequence is that mere existence and self-consciousness come to have something curiously abstract about them, so that one begins to distrust every impulse of life. One grows dizzy when walking; one shudders when one has to go down a flight of stairs; every window seems like a precipice which one dares not approach; to get out of bed seems a perilous adventure; eating and drinking are like absurd anachronisms; to talk to others is like talking to oneself; one can't laugh or cry; such things are 'outside'. One still wills and wills and wills, but there is nothing to will. It drives one mad. The most

exasperating thing is that the words by which one expresses one's will decay just like the will itself. Everything is so restricted, the up and the down; all within reach is emptiness; no wish, no urge, but only the most ordinary needs venture to obtrude themselves; and inside one one's brain spins and whirls to the point of despair. It is as though one were to walk in a forest and the path were to close in behind one; that's how speech falls away from one; what is precious about it is no longer there; its delicacy fades; the higher conceptions melt into something commonplace and vile. Sometimes memories rise up like fiery dragons; one holds one's breath, and it is nothing more than some meeting with a friend; or a beloved hand that once gave one a flower. But it is all immeasurably far away; one is amazed; one could sob with amazement that one ever had such an experience. Every few months I used to start out of my sleep, screaming: '*I?*' I, with a note of interrogation. But it's a curious thing about that *I*; listen carefully to the people who have been in this place for years; listen carefully when they speak, and you will notice that before every *I* they utter they pause a little while, just as people whose eyes are bandaged are afraid of stumbling. That has always moved me profoundly. But about these people here; that's a very special point. I don't know how I can make you understand it, how I can explain it; I see no end to the subject; I have only to begin and everything swims before my eyes. I haven't the talent of a Virgil, and I imagine that no Dante has ever seen it. And I don't want to bore you. I hope I am not boring you? No? That's good. But first I want to tell you something about one's hopes and expectations; because I have been speaking of one's memories, which gradually become as flimsy and as tiny as microbes, with the exception of one or two that stand out like beacons, and, although there is nothing in them, overpower one, although one can't tell why. . . . But what one anticipates, what one's curiosity fastens upon, is so mean and so pitiful that one is ashamed. What sort of an expression the warder will wear when he unlocks the door; whether the chaplain will rant during service as he did last time; whether a new

prisoner will be brought in to-day; whether one will succeed in getting cigarettes; whether the mouse will appear again to-day in the corridor, the mouse that ran up the director's trousers yesterday, to the general delight. . . . And then the people. During the first few years it was a relief to me to be busy with the others in the workshop. For seventeen months I slept with a group of men in a dormitory. But during that time I was still stunned; I did not see their faces, I could not tell one from the other; I was surrounded by yellow shadows; as long as we were compelled to be silent I did not notice that they were hostile to me, and when they were permitted to speak I did not listen to them, and still did not notice. They thought me arrogant and unsociable. He thinks he's better than we are, they jeered, calling me 'the schoolmaster', and 'Professor Fritz'; well, one understands that. But once there was a plot to escape, and another time they smuggled in some gin, and there was a regular debauch, and I pretended to know nothing about it and did not give anyone away—although the director and the assessor thought they would have an easy time with me—and I rose in their estimation; in their way they respected me. That, then, remained the tradition. The tradition about a convict is very strong in a place like this. Nevertheless, at that time I knew nothing about anybody. No one interested me. I asked no questions about anyone or anything; really their shoes were all I knew of any of them; at night—that was the most remarkable thing—at that time I had no sooner fallen on to my bed than I was sleeping like a log. You will find that confirmed by many men who, like myself, pass from the intellectual world into prison; that for years they sleep like a log all night. Apparently Nature comes to one's assistance; she doesn't want everything to be destroyed at one blow, and closes her last door against the rage of one's fellow-men. But once, at night, I woke up, and something was fingering and fumbling at my body. I can't tell you the sensation it gave me; I felt a beard, and hairy arms, and sweaty hands. I started up, trying to push the fellow off; he spat his stinking breath in my face, and growled: 'Shut your mouth, you dog!' Then I began to struggle with him, and

on either side, and below me—for my bed was one of the upper tier—I could hear chuckling and whispering. The fellow got one hand on my throat; the other was creeping up between my thighs; I pushed my knee into his stomach and my fingers into his eyes; he cursed hideously; all round me the giggling and whispering continued; at last I got the better of him, and threw him noisily from the bed to the floor. The warder appeared, and all was deathly quiet. The next day I put in a request for a separate cell, without any allusion to the incident. The director we had at that time was not hostile to me—he was the one who made the remark about the fifteen months—and when I told him that if I wasn't promptly given a separate cell I should go to pieces, he looked at me searchingly, as though I were concealing something from him, and then replied: 'Very well, it shall be arranged.' It was three weeks before I got it. We were greatly overcrowded at that time; in the meanwhile I had to deal with several dangerous attacks by this fellow; but that too passed, and then I got my cell. And then began something new; in a certain sense a new period."

8

Maurizius fell silent. His bluish forehead twitched faintly, like the skin of milk about to boil; his larynx rose and fell as he swallowed. Herr von Andergast sat in his chair, immovable as granite. He looked as though he were asleep. But he was so far from being asleep that the pause which the convict was making seemed to him an eternity.

"The first thing that was new about it," Maurizius resumed, "was that I could no longer sleep. I lost weight; I lost strength. My inability to sleep was due to my incessant delving into the past. No longer in the sense of *if* and *if I had*, as formerly. It was now simply a matter of conversations with people; justifications, reproaches, entreaties, explanations; of pondering night and day over the reason for certain words, events and actions, or the true character of this or that person, the illusions I had cherished in respect of so-and-so, the blunders I had committed on such and such an occasion, the injustice which had been done to me by

this person or that; and the person in question would stand bodily before me. I would wrangle with him, remember forgotten facts, and evolve the most subtle arguments; and this went on and on, on and on, like a wheel whirling down a hillside. I would quarrel with a printer who had cheated me four years ago, or I would take some fellow-student to task—some quite insignificant fellow—because he had slandered me. Once I had a heated discussion with a colleague on the faculty; I attacked him on account of his obtuse classicism; another time I had an encounter with the wife of a Geheimrat who had cut me in public, and I told her some home truths about her snobbery and worship of caste, as I should never, of course, have dared to do in reality. Or I would begin to eat my heart out because my best and oldest friend had betrayed me some six years earlier; I would talk to him and reproach him, and he would see how contemptible he had been, and would ask me to forgive him. On the other hand, I remembered how I myself had been treacherous and unfaithful; there was a young woman, in particular, whom I couldn't get out of my mind; I had treated her badly; and I employed all my powers of persuasion, all my mental ingenuity to conciliate her. There was a certain deliberate self-preservation in the way in which I occupied myself, first of all, with strangers, or with people who had become strangers to me, and I dealt with such people more and more intensively when I realized that in this way I could keep off the others, those who were closer to me. But I could not keep them off for ever. I gained further time by going over my examinations before the examining magistrate; I could often reproduce them question by question. This occupied hours and days; and in the end I was able to turn everything to my own advantage, so impressing the man by my explanations and objections that he admitted that the grounds for suspecting me were quite invalid. I enjoyed this like a victory, and was quite excited over it. But in the midst of my satisfaction I recalled my behaviour to my father; how ungrateful and unkind I had been, and how grieved he must have felt; and I made all sorts of confessions to him, and resolved to write him a letter. I thought out

a letter of many pages, which would make him understand that I had been forced to act as I did . . . still making excuses for myself, still whitewashing myself, still the same old Maurizius. But now Elli came between us and reproached me, as I had never dared to reproach myself, with the utter insincerity of my character, and I wrestled with her, trying to induce her to show me some mercy, but I found no mercy; I begged for love, but I found no love; no repentance and no contrition were of any avail. That is, at first; afterwards she was kinder, and I was able to tell her everything, and to clear myself of her worst reproaches. Once she even wept, and once she figured in an exciting drama. After a terrible scene she had opened her veins in her bath; I rushed in to her; she was lying in the bath, already motionless; the water was quite red, and between her thighs my little daughter Hildegard was kneeling, with a mirror in her hand, gazing at me with wide eyes as though she was realizing for the first time what sort of a person I was. These were no dreams; good God, I am not describing my dreams. But what then? you will ask; what then?—when for example, I confronted Gregor Waremmé and besieged him with proofs and entreaties until he finally broke down, and I felt: Now you are done for, Satan. . . . What then, what then? An orgy of *arrières pensées*, perhaps; a pandemonium of all that one failed to say and failed to do, or did and said too late; of all that one feared or desired; of all that bleeds and stifles one afterwards; of actual reality and seeming reality, inextricably intermingled; the law of events, deduced with passionate casuistry from the course of events, and read backwards as one reads mirror-writing. Although all this had been going on from May or thereabouts to November, the most important character had not yet appeared. I say appeared, for my thoughts had often brushed her in passing; her name was often in my mind; it was like the girder that supported the whole structure; first my life of lies, and now my life of atonement; but I had managed to cover it over. With incredible cunning I had contrived to avoid her image; I was so afraid of it, I so dreaded seeing it and retaining it that I plunged with absolute

frenzy into the most indifferent recollections, and exaggerated them until my brain was like a blazing merry-go-round. It was all in vain. As the nights grew longer, when winter came, then . . . suddenly, from one hour to the next, it was upon me. I am not going to be ashamed of myself. I have made up my mind to tell everything. It is beyond anything that shame would forbid me to say; it no longer has anything to do with shame. I don't know whether other men are ever in such a position that they no longer care how their words react upon themselves or are judged by others . . . care for nothing, except that for once they should emerge from their subterranean chamber, from the grave in which they are buried; and who knows whether I myself shall ever be in such a mood again! It's by no means certain; I feel as though very soon things might lose their colour, and I myself might not be so clear in my own mind about them. Self-knowledge is a state of illumination in which one no longer either loves or hates oneself. . . . Well, this was what happened as regards Anna and her appearing before me. . . . At first she was Anna, the girl, the woman I had known, who to me . . . well, I needn't go on, I think you understand. Her frock was ruched or trimmed with lace; her beautiful hair was done as usual; she had her blue or her grey shawl; I knew it all so well; it was all so beautiful, so unique. Her eyes, her mouth, the colour of her hair, her lips, the occasional gesture of her hand, and how she would take five quick steps and then, suddenly, two slow ones; how she blinked her left eyelid a little when she smiled, how she raised her chin when she asked you a question, and how she would press her hand to her cheek when she was reflecting. . . . It was all so unique, so individual, so characteristic of Anna. . . . And then I knew: never again. You can never see that again. You will never see her again. Never again. She is alive, she is moving about a room, she is talking to people, she is pressing her hand to her cheek, she is raising her chin inquiringly, she is wearing the ruched frock: and you will never see her again. Perhaps you know that poem of Poe's, *The Raven*; every stanza ends with the refrain: 'Quoth the raven, nevermore'. I used to say it to myself

every day: 'Quoth the raven, nevermore'. Well, I was cherishing an unquenchable hope that some time everything would come to light, that I should be completely exonerated. But as soon as Anna's image appeared, my hopes fell into dust, and I knew with deadly lucidity: Nevermore. Since my whole life was still straining towards her the image could not lie, and therefore the hope must be false. But I could bear with that so long as this yearning still existed . . . this yearning . . . oh, yearning doesn't express it. Yearning . . . there is no word for what I felt. . . . It is the torture of tortures, it is dying without death. One feels as if one could not bear it another day, not another hour, not another minute. The doors must fly open, now, this very second; the time which is passing is not real; if you cannot go to her to-morrow your brain will burst; the walls and bolts and gates do not exist—and yet, great God, they are there! In some city or other, in some house or other, she is living, breathing, thinking, sleeping: and here—never again. It is past all understanding. Of course, you will object: the guilt. And indeed, I had heaped up guilt enough. Man is divorced from mankind by guilt. And woman from man. Judgment has been given, even if for an illusory guilt; but you are condemned for your own, and perhaps that was greater than you knew. But all this is true only for a certain time. This ecstasy and enthusiasm of self-sacrifice can endure only so long as one can hold on to the image for which one is yearning. And suddenly the beast in the flesh revolts against it. Waiting, waiting; one gets no farther. The beast gets the upper hand, and one is no longer responsible for what happens. The image of desire fades. Anna is no longer Anna. The loving awareness of her is gone. Your sentence divorces man from woman; your institution turns man into a beast. Despair gives birth to secret vice. The institution says: 'What can I do? I cannot help it.' Think of what happens among those who have no image of desire to lose. They possess only what their sensual memory has retained: pictures of prostitutes, whom they tear to pieces. Jack the Rippers, all of them. I have seen men dehumanized . . . oh! I, too, in the end, lost control. The beloved image was shivered like wood under the

hatchet. Shadows grew out of one's conceptions and recollections, and shadows became bodies. Women, women, women! Not one of them had a face; only breasts, bellies, thighs, warm skin, tickling hair, a stupefying something of sheer sex that fell on one like scalding rain, and turned one's blood into slime, one's palate into a piece of leather, one's hair into a sweat-cap. There was no peace left; it drove one about the cell by day and by night; if one lay down for a moment . . . what one saw made all the obscenities ever drawn or painted, such as delight the sensualists, look pale and insipid; compared with this, the famous temptations of St. Anthony are like the illustrations of a ladies' journal. He, after all, was able to escape his fate; there was renunciation; but who can assert of himself that he has made the final renunciation? There is always still a reservation . . . in a word, he can open the door. But here? Just think; I was not yet thirty. If they had only castrated me! Just think, not yet thirty, and buried alive. Everything is transformed into the sexual act and arouses a sexual madness; if two clouds in the sky approach one another; if the carpenter in the workshop mortices planks together; if the warder thrusts the key into the lock; the blade of grass sticking out of a crevice; one's own tongue when one wets one's lips; the Latin capitals in the title of a book; the cork in a bottle. And the thing is so horribly multiplied in such a place as this; one feels that everyone is being roasted on the same grill. The infection of five hundred other blood-streams, intoxicated with the same drug, has a more dreadful effect upon the mind than the worst dissipation. The loathing, the brutal, sullen loathing! One is no longer of any value in one's own eyes. All one's thoughts are choked with sand, encrusted with mud! The heart dries up and becomes a greasy leathern bottle. Has anyone outside any conception of this? Impossible. Otherwise, no child born to you could ever again play joyfully; no young bride could lie down on her wedding-bed without becoming frozen with horror and loathing. Of course, even such conditions as these have their climax and their decline. With me it lasted, about . . . let me see, a year and a half. I don't know whether you have even an

approximate idea what a year and a half means; first in general, and then, particularly, in such a hell of ten square yards. Every estimate of time is really a negation of time. Afterwards there comes a sort of festering dullness. One is so broken that one feels as though one could take oneself to pieces like a wooden puppet; here is the head, the feet are a mile away. This again lasts a few months. Then one begins to sleep again; a new kind of sleep, which one has not known before. One. . . . I am speaking, of course, of myself. The impersonal merely arises from the fact that one is a specimen, a number; sometimes I ask myself whether there isn't something else between myself and my surface; a product of dissolution; something horribly dead—a crazy idea, isn't it? The kind of sleep I mean has just this peculiarity; it has no surface, no contour, as if one had lost one's volume, as if one were fluid, as if one had become a sort of pudding, a mere carcass. One smells like a carcass to oneself; do you understand? And that even gets into one's sleep. When I had got over that—and isn't it crazy that everything really passes, really *passes*—isn't that terrible? Well, when I had got over that, I slowly understood that I had been in my cell for days and years alone. 'What,' I said to myself, 'alone?' It was just as though I had been awaking from death. Where was everybody? I was afraid of the emptiness. I was afraid of the solitude and of being alone. I began to talk to myself. I caught myself repeating the same sentence to myself for an hour at a time. The mechanical occupations which they gave me did not help me at all. I might just as well have stuck my fingers into my mouth, one after the other. It was about this time that I asked for books. I received the books; I was permitted to write. That helped. That helped me for eight months. During those eight months I did some intellectual work. I had a curious experience. To all appearance it was the same work as before, outside in the world; I used the same words, wrote in the same style, worked with the same conceptions, drew the same deductions. But that was all on the surface. As a matter of fact, everything was mummified. It was as though an automaton had applied itself to imitating the real Leonhart Maurizius, with

painful accuracy. There was no spirit, no soul in the work. When I read it and re-read it, I could not find any objection to it; the construction was good; the thoughts were logical, sometimes even quite original; my memory was functioning perfectly; and for a long while I did not know what it was about it that made me so uncomfortable; until I realized that it was an imitation. Maurizius was playing at being Maurizius. A more mysterious thing you cannot imagine. Playing with the knowledge and the products of another life, acting as though one still believed it it, taking its expressions and turns of thought, its leading theories and fundamental principles for real and living things, though they are really mere corpses which are made to quiver artificially; treating them with a seriousness and a zeal which one knows in one's innermost heart serve no purpose save that of deceiving oneself. Nothing real left. It was all so stupidly dismal that I should have to pull myself together to grind out my daily task; in the end something came of it, even if it was only a lifeless specimen. Do you know that obstinate, guilty boredom which overcomes one when one is producing something which is due to effort only instead of to impulse? It is like lying before God. The day came when I could do it no longer. I remember it was Good Friday, 1913. I got up and threw my pen in the wastebucket. 'That's the end,' I said, 'the end'; and I felt so sick that I vomited. Then for a few days I walked about my cell as though I were looking for something. Then that talking to myself began again. Then I began to press my ear to the wall and to listen. I made signals; I pounded on the stone and listened. There were replies to the signal; but I did not know what they meant. I sang songs; the inspector came and forbade me to sing. At night I would hammer on the iron bed with my fists; at times I would walk up and down in the darkness, calling out names—Christopher, Johann, Max—always the same names; and I would imagine people whose names were Christopher, Johann or Max. The cell would become enormous, like a great hall, and immediately afterwards as small as a sardine-tin; the ceiling would be just over my head, and the floor several storeys below me, and

I was left choking and dangling in the air. You see, delusion has infinite possibilities; sanity has only one. I occupied myself in working out the value of π , or reckoning how many stars are conceivable in the sky; or whether one could write the whole of Homer on the inside surface of the door. I reckoned, I calculated, endlessly. I tried to count the threads in the blanket, the fly-specks on the windows, the grains of rice in the soup. I said the Lord's Prayer backwards, and tried to do the same thing with Schiller's *Bell*, for days on end, until I howled like a dog with the fear of going mad. I heard a rattling and jingling everywhere, and steps coming towards my cell. When winter came, towards the end of November—you must not be surprised that I always give the dates; I must proceed chronologically in order to keep track of events—that is, towards the end of the year, I became very ill. In the hospital I was in a ward with six other men. Three of them belonged to my group; I knew them from our daily walks. They were all seriously ill. One man, whom I did not know, had such a deep wound in his head that when it was dressed one could look into his brain. We were forbidden to talk, but we managed nevertheless to exchange a few words. There, of course, no one wore masks. In the workshop, at divine service, and during our walks, we were still obliged to wear masks at that time. Two of the men had life sentences; one had already been here for twenty years, and was counting on getting out in five years' time. He spoke of it constantly, with glowing eyes, as though five years were only like five days. One of them had been in prison in Baden until recently, and during his last days there he had witnessed an execution which took place beneath his window. It had made such a frightful impression upon him that he was constantly having convulsions. I considered these men. I considered them as a man on a voyage of discovery, who comes upon an unknown island, looks at a new species of human beings. The thought which terrified me was: You have been seven years in this place, and haven't the slightest ghost of an idea about one of these men. And they are your fellows; that is, your world. From the other room I could sometimes hear a delirious man raving.

One man sobbed night and day. The doctor said that he was malingering. But a little while afterwards he was removed to the asylum. My neighbour, a little red-haired man, whispered all sorts of things to me about himself and our comrades. Then I saw that if I had gone on as I was for another year, I too should have found my way to the mad-house. I trembled at the idea. Why does one want to hold on to the future? Why does one want to live? It is a puzzle. Suddenly, you may believe it or not, my life had content again. When I ceased to destroy myself, once more, like a shy little blade of grass, something like a self came into existence within me."

9

"How long were you in the hospital?" asked Herr von Andergast, in a broken voice. The answer to the question meant less to him than the sound of his own voice, for he had been afraid that he would be unable to speak.

"Nine weeks," replied Maurizius. "When I was well again, and got back to my cell, I asked to see the director, and begged him to let me sweep out the corridors, or do some kitchen work two or three times a week. He refused; they always refuse on principle, whatever a man asks. A month later, after the great revolt, when the cabinet minister had visited the place, my request was granted."

"I remember," nodded Herr von Andergast, laying his left hand, on which the diamond ring sparkled, over his eyes: "I remember that insurrection. A wretched business. . . ."—"Yes, a wretched business, if you like. . . ."—"You, of course, had nothing to do with it?"—"No."—"There were six people shot down, if I remember correctly."—"Yes, you remember quite correctly. Six shot down; twenty-three wounded."

"How did it happen?" asked Herr von Andergast. Maurizius smiled; a wan smile. "Perhaps there were weevils in the bread." It was as though he had said: "What's the use of trying to explain?" As a matter of fact this question, too, was a mere pretence, a pretext; for the attorney-general, who was still

suffering from a kind of intellectual cramp, was pursuing the accustomed formulæ of inquiry (as to behaviour, rank, social position, general information, etc.), like a man who clings, with all his strength, to the last ties, before chaos breaks over him. His condition can hardly be defined: he wanted Maurizius to go on talking; he wanted this at any cost; at the same time he was afraid of what was yet to come; so much so, indeed, that he felt like holding his hands over his ears. He considered the possibility of diverting the conversation to some neutral subject (as compared with the present narrative even the discussion of the trial, the murder and everything connected with it seemed neutral), while at the same time he was aware of the cowardice and weakness of this attempt to escape. He would have liked to leave the cell; the moment he resolved to do so he realized the absurdity of the resolve, and the impossibility of carrying it out. An inexplicable desire held him chained to his chair; an inexplicable depression made him incapable of acting in accordance with any plan; he gazed at the face on the coarse pillow, and could not get away from it; he wanted to look at his watch, and could not even put his hand into his waistcoat pocket.

"The guilty were most cruelly punished," murmured Maurizius.—"Your interest in your fellow-prisoners was probably increased by this event," Herr von Andergast observed listlessly. Maurizius glanced at him with the eyes of a broken, all but paralysed man. "Yes, and by the weevils in the bread and the stinking meat."—"Such things don't happen," Herr von Andergast broke out; "the food is strictly supervised." Maurizius shrugged his shoulders. "Very well, take it in a metaphorical sense," he answered harshly. "There *are* weevils in the bread."

He brooded awhile, and then relapsed into the stammering which had often been noticeable during their previous conversations. He returned to the inhuman punishments, the ice-cold showers, the floggings with leather thongs, the strait-jacket, the dark punishment cells. His pupils dilated and remained fixed, profoundly black. He moved his head to and fro in torment, then raised it, and let it fall back on the straw pillow. He uttered a

name; Klakusch, the warder Klakusch. It seemed to be connected with some decisive experience. Yet there was something before that. It was not easy to keep track of his confused narrative as it moved backwards and forwards; he evidently found it difficult to avoid confounding the periods, especially after the continuous solitude in his cell had come to an end, and the emptiness of space was once more filled with figures. Moving about the building more freely on two days a week, he encountered his fellow-prisoners. He became remarkably intimate with them; curiously enough, with the worst of them, the so-called incorrigibles. A sinister magic drew him to them; it was like a burning thirst. Can the darkness dazzle one? Perhaps it gave him a passionate intellectual pleasure to feel that everything that moved and illumined the world to which he had once belonged was consumed and blackened in this murky abyss. The high achievements, the moral aims, art and philosophy, were like so many calcined and unrecognizable stumps. Humanity was sharply divided into an above and a below. Below, the dictatorship of vileness was absolute. He encountered two or three hundred men who were mysteriously alike in their degeneration; fellows who lay in ambush on the outskirts of society like tigers in a jungle. Evil was not conceived or devised, it simply *was*. These men's faces were seared by every conceivable vice. No foreheads. Their chins seemed to have been chopped off. All types for the criminal pathologist. It was questionable whether they possessed what one calls a soul. Destined to crime from the beginning, they measured the value of life by their greed, the goods of the world by the danger involved in winning or destroying them. Law? A scrap of paper. Duty to the state or society? Enough to make a cat laugh. Religion was the same. A respectable existence? A refuge from the police. Prison? A matter of course. Love? Are there not plenty of whores in the world? Worry? Drink, you damned idiot! Parents, wife, children? Rotten talk: deserves a kick in the backside. Death? Darkness; the end of things.

So one would think. Maurizius advanced all this in such a way that one felt a counter-current beneath it, like a counsel for the

defence who is preparing for his thesis by its antithesis. He was so full of the knowledge and experience which had pierced his heart that his release of emotion was almost like an epileptic seizure. Yet his emotions had probably saved him. That was presumably what he meant by his "shy little blade of grass" and the resurrection of a "self". During the second half of 1915, at a time when the war had already begun to pour its human dregs into the penitentiaries, the warder Klakusch came into his life. He came from Cassel; he had been transferred. A man with a yellow patriarchal beard, which covered his whole face and reached to his belt, a flattened nose, and little red, watery eyes. He always wore his cap pulled far down over his forehead; he looked a disagreeable fellow, and now and again he would laugh in a nasty, gloating way, one could not guess why. He was on service in the corridor in which Maurizius's cell was situated. "I disliked him at first," admitted Maurizius; "he would often stand silently staring for five minutes in the doorway; then he would click his tongue and go. That clicking of the tongue made me particularly nervous. One day he came up to me and spoke to me. 'You are an educated man, I have been told. Something of a scholar. Now listen to me; can you tell me something; what really is a criminal?' I looked at him in surprise. 'Why, what do you mean?' I asked.—'Well, I only mean that there are so many; you know; one has all sorts of ideas, you know.'—'What kind of ideas?' I asked.—'Well, just ideas,' he said, wiping his running eyes. 'There, for example, is number three hundred and sixteen, a boy who would not hurt a fly. Really a boy you could like. Killed his girl, because she treated him frightfully badly. When he gets out after the eight years that they've put on him, he's a goner. Anæmia or tuberculosis; you know our illnesses. And apart from that, what is he to learn here with us? Have you ever looked at him? Funny that he should be a criminal.' He clicked his tongue and went away. He wasn't at all curious about my answer. I thought to myself: 'What kind of a fellow is he?' I puzzled over him for quite a while. He must have liked something about me from the beginning. At first I suspected that he

wanted to pump me, or that he had fits of talkativeness, and was amusing himself with me. But my doubts and distrust did not continue long. There was something remarkable about the man. He pretended to be so simple, he seemed so harmless, and when one had been with him a little while one had the feeling that he knew about everything in the world, and that one only needed to ask him. But he was interested in nothing but the prison; he talked of nothing but the convicts. He was seventy-four years old, and had been working in prisons for thirty-five years. He had seen armies of criminals pass before him, and was more familiar with criminal proceedings and penal conditions than many highly-placed officials. But he did not take any credit to himself; he did not take credit to himself for anything; neither for the way in which he performed his difficult duties, nor for his experiences; and he did not seem to have an inkling of the unfathomable depths of knowledge which he had within him. But one could not give any conception of the man, even if one wrote a book about him. 'I'd like to know why you're always so sad,' he said to me one day. 'I always say to the boys: everything's regulated for you, you have a good bed, sufficient nourishment, and a roof over your heads: what more do you want? No worries, no business; you don't have to struggle; what more do you want?' I replied: 'My dear man, that consolation does not come from your heart.' He rose stiffly, and said: 'No, it doesn't really. You are right.'—'Well, then what's to be done?' I asked. And he: 'What's to be done? If one knew that. But realize this: the judge can't do any differently. The mistake is this: When a judge condemns he, as a human being, is condemning a human being, and that ought not to be.'—'Really,' I asked in astonishment, 'you think that ought not to be?'—'It ought not to be,' he repeated, in a tone which I have never been able to forget; 'a human being should not condemn a human being.'—'And what about punishment?' I objected. 'Isn't punishment necessary? It has been since the world began.' He leaned towards me and whispered: 'Then we must destroy the world and create people who think differently. That has been hammered into us since childhood;

but it has nothing to do with the real human being. It's a lie, that's what it is. A lie. He who punishes lies away his own sin. 'There you have it. But don't repeat that, or the superintendent will send me to the devil.' Now that seemed very curious to me. Very soon I waited impatiently every day for the hour when he appeared. He told me everything that happened in the prison. Once he was unusually excited; he showed it by constantly clicking his tongue. 'They have just brought in two young boys,' he said; 'they have condemned them to four and five years for a street robbery. Vagrants. They hadn't had anything to eat for two days and two nights; they were walking along the street in the rain; in a village they found a drunkard lying in a ditch, and took all his money, three marks twenty-five. Nine years of penitentiary for three marks twenty-five.' He took me by the shoulder and shook me, as though I had condemned them, as though I could help it. I said: 'You see what a world we live in, Klakusch.' He looked at me frowning, and said: 'I want to ask you something, with regard to a person and his action; is an action the man?'—'No,' was my answer; 'the action is not the person, and therein lies the whole mistake.' Then he left me, and as he went out he murmured: 'So it isn't, it isn't, the action is not the person.' Suddenly he turned round again, and said: 'Yesterday I had a discussion with two hundred and ninety. He sits and sits and thinks and thinks. Real penitentiary case. Committed incest. His woman was always playing about with other men; he let her go her way; did not dare to protest; he was too fond of her. In the end his desire gave him no peace; there was a pretty daughter in the house, a light-headed little thing; took after her mother; she seems to have seduced him; the wife finds it out, and, in order to get rid of him, she denounces him to the police. That's how it is with such people. I ask him: Was it you who did it? He doesn't understand. I tap him on the chest: *You*, I say. Yes, I, he said, frightened. Well, then you are guilty, says I. And he: But there is no judge for such a thing as that. How's that? I ask. I don't recognize the judge, he says. Such a stupid wretch.'—'Perhaps not so stupid, Klakusch,' I interrupted.

'Perhaps,' he admitted; 'perhaps, and do you know something else? He became good through having been bad; I have seen that happen often. There is no getting to the bottom of these people; one can study them a hundred years and not know them. Some come in here, and instead of repenting they say: 'I was out of luck'. As if it were a lottery, and every one paid for his ticket; as if there was no one but cheats and murderers in the world, and he who is not caught draws the lucky number. But that isn't a moral feeling, is it? Where is there moral feeling, anyway, will you tell me that?' He looked at me slyly, but I could not tell him. Then he suddenly said to me, solemnly: 'But I can tell you something; I can tell you what a criminal is.'—'Well?' I said eagerly.—'A criminal is one who ruins himself, that's what he is. The human being who ruins himself is a criminal.'—'That is true, Klakusch, that is frightfully true.' He nodded in a friendly way and patted me on the head. A few days later he came with a piece of news; he brought it out even before he had closed the door. Number four hundred and twelve had made his confession. It was already known all over the prison. He had been obstinately silent for three and a half years; it had been impossible to get a syllable out of him; he had only walked round and round, savagely grinding his teeth, scratching his fingers raw against the walls, and raging against God and man. That morning at five o'clock he had suddenly asked for the chaplain, and when he came he screamed his whole guilt in his face, frothing at the mouth; and then he had fallen down in a corner of the cell, and hadn't opened his mouth again; he was still lying there. It seemed to me as though it had all happened before me. When he described such an event one saw it all, down to the smallest detail. And not only that; it remained engraven in one's memory; it became a vision. He told me, for example, that one winter night, many years ago, a man who had been set free had come to him and begged him with folded hands to take him into his room, or to hide him somewhere in the penitentiary; he did not know where to go; he hadn't a pfennig; he would not be responsible for himself; it was heart-breaking; a broken, desperate man. He,

Klalusch, had talked to him all night long, and had straightened him out to a certain extent; he had given him a little money and sent him away with the advice: At least, don't do anyone any harm. He had told it in such a way that I wasn't able to eat a mouthful of food all day; I can still hear how he talked to him: 'Boy, boy,' and: 'don't sink so deep into your trouble,' and 'don't do anyone any harm!' Once we spoke of that scoundrel who had been here for four years, the tailor who had strangled a woman. He told me that at the prison conference they had been quite at their wits' end; they did not know what to do with him; he was so refractory. I said such a fellow wasn't a human being; it was a mistake to treat him like one. Klalusch replied that it certainly looked like that; if one promised him a double portion of dripping on his bread for murdering his brother, he probably wouldn't hesitate a moment. 'Well, then,' I said. 'It may be so,' he said, 'but so much is certain: in his mother's womb he was not yet bad.' And as I was silent he added: 'If he was not yet bad in his mother's womb, he is just such a human being as you or I or the Regierungspräsident. The reproach which I have to make against him does not, after all, mean that I am just towards him.'— 'What do you mean, Klalusch, *just*?' I asked him. He said: 'No one should really use that word.'— 'Why, Klalusch?' He said: 'It is a word like a fish; it slips away from you when you seize it.' And then: 'If one had the voice, what couldn't one do? But the voice is lacking.' A few days later I had some words in the hall with a convict who was very repulsive to me, a sly, gloomy fellow; he was repulsive to me for the nature of his crime, too; as an assistant schoolmaster he had seduced a lot of little boys to all sorts of nastiness. I told Klalusch about my row with the man; he listened quietly; then he said: 'I would like to give you some good advice; it won't cost you much to follow it: just try being nice. Just try it some time; try being nice; you won't believe what it will do. Just a little niceness, you know; it's like the magic herb that's said to open brass locks. Just you think of that some time, and try it.' I, like an obedient pupil, really tried it. And I saw that he was right. Often enough a

friendly smile would change the sourest expression in a moment. I had the most remarkable experiences. These people no longer regard it as possible that anyone should behave to them as one does any chance acquaintance outside; I don't mean simply being polite or agreeable, for that's not it; that would even make them suspicious in many cases. The thing is to show them some respect; the most ordinary consideration; that they have forgotten, and they look at one with astonished eyes, and don't know how to behave at first when they meet with it again. It has even happened that one of them has turned round and begun to cry like a little boy. You will perhaps regard this as sentimentality; in which case it would be better if I didn't speak of it; if that's so I should have been wiser to have held my tongue from the beginning. With me it resulted in my becoming more and more intimate with Klakusch; when he had a day off I missed him so that I was anxious and uncomfortable without him; he, too, became fonder and fonder of me, although he seldom let this appear. Once he told me he had never had a son; and if he imagined one he would want him to be like me. 'Doesn't it make any difference to you that I am a convict, condemned for life?'—'No,' he replied, 'in this case it does not matter at all.' Then I resolved to ask him another question, only I did not know how to do it; I was even afraid. And then that was the end. It happened four years ago. He has been dead four years."

10

"I don't understand," said Herr von Andergast, hesitatingly: "had his death any connection with that, with your question?"—"Precisely. I will tell you that later. Then . . . that's enough. I have often thought over it since; that is the amazing thing about the relationships one may stumble into. Anyone outside would undoubtedly describe such a relation as that between myself and the warder Klakusch as romantic and improbable. Perhaps he would even say that it had existed in my imagination, that it had not existed in reality. And if a persistent sceptic were to press me, it is possible that I myself should regard the whole thing as a

dream. For that is the way with all experience; after a certain time it becomes a dream; the ego to which it has happened is no longer the ego which remembers. There may well have been dream-faces here at times when the old man stood there, with his flaxen beard, in the twilight. At that time I already had this cell, and I felt as though I had a human soul in my breast again, because the old man had one. For that is what matters. When he is alone, a human being has no soul; you may safely take my word for that. And consequently, when he is alone he has no God. And when I think of the nights . . . his voice was still in the room, I could go on talking to him, as I sometimes do even now—for me no one dies—and many of his sayings which I have preserved have come to me out of the night and non-existence. A brain like this (he touched his forehead) is like the gong of a Chinese temple; when one only touches it with the tip of one's forefinger there is a sound as though a cathedral bell were ringing under water. But in order to allay your doubts, and really to explain what I meant by romanticism: you must not forget that a prison is a soil in which plants flourish which you in the outer world have not yet classified, and where things happen concerning which one must assume that they come from some intermediate world. Everything is so narrow and so wide, so empty and so full, and what one calls fate is so close to one. I just wanted to say that as a preface. I don't know whether it means anything to you. For some days—I mean, of course, during the hours we were together—I had been talking to Klakusch about the prison in general. In that year, after the meeting, there had been many improvements, and things had been made easier; this had aroused certain hopes in me, but Klakusch thought they were unfounded; if the flour was bad it was of no use to put raisins in the dough. The evil must be looked for elsewhere, and—this the experts did not see—it lay in the measuring-rod. If one had only an inch of guilt, he said, just any little ordinary human being, they would condemn him to a yard of punishment without considering his person. Who had the right to punish without considering the person? That was a divine right, to punish without respect of

persons. At first I didn't understand him; at last I realized that he meant, not the outer person, that was sufficiently 'considered'; but the inner. The critical point was, he explained, how much self-responsibility a person was able to stand; in that respect no two men were alike. I objected that we had got away from the actual principle of punishment long ago, as well as from the principle of retaliation, and the idea of deterring by terror; the protection of society and the improvement of the criminal was all that was considered now. He replied that the talk of protection was as empty as the talk of improvement; those who knew only laughed at both; for how could you prevent a madman from tearing his face with his own hands? The human world is such a maniac; it professes to protect what it is constantly destroying by its lack of understanding. For this reason he cried: 'Stop, human world, and attack the problem from another side!' We had this conversation one December afternoon; since the morning a fall of snow had been darkening the cell, and before he left Klakusch said: 'I don't enjoy things any more; the tally of my days is full; I know too much about things; nothing more goes into my head or my heart.' When he came again, towards evening, to empty the bucket—he always did this for me, though according to the regulations I ought to have done it myself—as he stood there before me, I summoned up my courage and asked him: 'Tell me, Klakusch, do you think that there are innocent men under sentence in this prison?' He seemed unprepared for the question, and answered, hesitatingly, that 'that might well be'. I asked him another question: 'How many innocent men who have been condemned have you known during your work; I mean, men who were notoriously innocent?' He considered awhile, then he counted on his fingers, murmuring their names under his breath. 'Eleven.'—'And did you believe in their innocence as soon as you came to know them?'—'No, no,' he replied, 'not then; if one had believed in their innocence, and then had had to watch them eating their hearts out, if one had known for certain, why, I tell you. . . .' I pressed him: 'Then, what then, Klakusch?'—'Well, then,' he said, 'then, speaking literally, one could not

go on living.' It had already grown dark in the cell; I could still just distinguish his figure; and then I ventured the question which was in my heart, the question I really wanted to ask: 'Well, what about myself, Klakusch; do you believe me guilty or innocent?' And he: 'Must I answer?'—'I should like you to answer me openly and honestly,' I said. He considered again, then he said: 'Well; to-morrow morning you shall have your answer.' And early the next day the answer came. He had hanged himself from the window-frame of his room."

Maurizius turned his face to the wall and lay there quite still. A quarter of an hour passed; there was absolute silence in the cell. It is uncertain how long that mysterious silence would have lasted if there had not been a knock on the barred door. It was the prison doctor who was going to make his rounds. When informed of the presence of the attorney-general he asked if he might see the patient; he would not disturb them for long. A corpulent gentleman entered, with gold-rimmed spectacles on his little round lump of a nose; he greeted the attorney-general with the salute of an officer of the reserve, reached for the convict's wrist in order to feel his pulse, yapped out a few condescending and satisfied phrases, bowed, and took his leave.

Herr von Andergast had risen. He felt as though he had been sitting on that chair for nineteen years. In those nineteen years he had grown old, tired and useless. His embarrassed glance wandered over to the convict, who was lying stiffly on his bed, his two hands clenched upon his chest. One ought to say something, thought Herr von Andergast. No, replied another peremptory voice within him; no, not a word. He reached for the hat which he had put on the table nineteen years ago, and the brown leather gloves. He made an effort to be silent. Herr von Andergast, Baron, Attorney-General, with his hat and his brown leather gloves in his right hand, slipped like a thief from the cell of Convict 357.

The car was waiting. "Drive quickly," he called out to the chauffeur, and fell into a corner of the car, staring out into the

rain with wide violet-blue eyes. He saw nothing, he looked at nothing; he thought nothing; he felt nothing.

Back in his office, at three o'clock in the afternoon, he sent a telegram of two hundred words to the Minister of Justice, in which he urgently requested him to grant an immediate pardon to the convict Maurizius.

PART THREE

THE IRREVOCABILITY OF DEATH

CHAPTER XIV

I

WHEN Etzel got out of the car he was dizzy. "Pull yourself together, man!" he said to himself. The light of the arc lamp poured over his face like liquid wax. Four flights of stairs, each of twenty-three steps, made two hundred and ninety steps. An infernal height! Pilsener beer-bottles and buckets of whitewash. On the top flight there was a purple darkness. The door of the flat was open. Melitta stood in the hall, a ridiculous green shawl wound around her so tightly that she looked like a bean-pole. "Has anyone been here?" asked Etzel, uneasily. The girl replied, rudely: "Who in the world should have been here; who comes to see you anyway; did anyone ever come here?" Etzel replied: "That's true; but it's possible that someone will come."—"Sure to be the right sort," replied the amiable creature; "you seem to have particularly distinguished acquaintances." Once in his room, Etzel dropped into a chair, thrust his hands into his trousers' pockets, and pressed the nape of his neck against the back of the chair. He wished that the gas had already been lighted, but he was too tired to strike a match. His wish was fulfilled sooner than he had dared to hope. Frau Schneevogt appeared, and expressed her astonishment that he was sitting in the dark. He said, coolly, that he liked the dark. She declared that he was an eccentric young gentleman, and made a light. She asked him whether she should bring him something to eat. Since he had not touched his lunch, she would warm it up for him. (As she spoke her face assumed an expression that was an advertisement of rigid honesty.) Etzel thanked her, and said that he was not hungry. Frau Schneevogt remarked, anxiously, that she did not like the look of him. "A touch of the 'flu," he said lightly, and crossed his outstretched legs in a masculine fashion. She recommended him to go to bed, and promised to bring him some hot sugar-water, an infallible remedy. Etzel thought resentfully: if only you would get out of here, you horrible woman. She, however, was longing to talk, or at least for some support. She inquired whether he had

overheard the quarrel which she had had with her daughter that afternoon. Later on it had all begun again, and Herr Schneevogt himself had got dreadfully excited. Etzel interposed that he had heard something, and had inferred that there was some domestic difference of opinion. "If it was only that!" sighed Frau Schneevogt. Since she revealed such an urgent desire to initiate him into the secret of the conflict, he surrendered. The thin, distracted hands seemed to gesticulate close to his eyes.

The trouble was this: In the business where Melitta was employed (a large millinery house) an employee, who had not been long engaged, had been crippled by an accident to the lift, which was out of order. He was employed only as an "outside helper"; he was really a down-and-out opera-singer, and he was not registered under the Workers' Compensation Act; and this fact had been overlooked. He was claiming damages, the cost of his treatment; the firm denied their responsibility, insisted that the accident was due to his own negligence, and brought forward a number of other employees as witnesses. These people were prepared to say anything that one asked them to say; they were trembling for their miserable jobs. Only Melitta refused. And she was to be the chief witness; she had been in the packing-room at the time of the accident. She not only refused to speak for the firm, but she resolutely took the other side; was prepared to swear that the lift had been out of order for two days before the accident, that the man had not been careless, or drunk, as some people were supposed to have said, but had simply been snatched up by the lift, and in half a second he was hanging in the shaft with mangled arms and shoulders. The manager, Frau Schneevogt complained, was furious at the girl's want of loyalty. She and Herr Schneevogt, of course, were also extremely angry. It had been hinted to Melitta that the department in which she was working was going to be given up very soon, but that they were considering the question of taking her on as the head of another department which they were about to open. "You understand," said Frau Schneevogt. Certainly, Etzel understood; in spite of the dull ache in his head he understood: a contemptible

mixture of menace and bribery. "The silly goose," wailed Frau Schneevogt, wringing her hands: "she doesn't know on which side her bread is buttered. In times like these, too, when anyone may be on their uppers for months before they can find even a respectable half-way position!" Mother Schneevogt had got so far in her story when the door crashed open, and Melitta shot in. She flew at her mother like an angry cat: "And if you stood on your head and waved your legs in the air till midnight, I'd never, never, never do it!" Then, turning to Etzel, in her hard, thin, soprano: "There they are, holding a bait before your nose to get you to do a mean dirty trick, to do a poor devil who's maimed for life, anyhow, out of a few groschen; not even enough for those rich wasters to pay for an oyster lunch." Was she to allow herself to be wheedled by them? Let Mohl say what he thought: was one to hold one's tongue in such a case, or wasn't it more honest to drop the whole boiling of 'em and rot in the gutter? She dropped on to the stool, lifted her thin shoulders, and broke into hysterical weeping. Well, that's nice, thought Etzel in dismay; a raving woman! and he tried to get up. "Get out," said Melitta commandingly to her mother. "I've got something to say to that chap there."

She waited until the door was closed, and then whispered, with a morose expression: "That fellow's done for if a lawyer doesn't help him to get his rights. I know one who is said to be a sharp customer: J. Silberbaum, Lottumstrasse. But a fellow like that won't lift a finger without cash in advance. Lend me forty marks, Mohl, and I'll pay it back in instalments. At the moment I'm broke. If I had the money I shouldn't have to ask you for it."

Etzel concealed his embarrassment. His whole remaining fortune was eighty-six marks. Board and lodging were paid in advance for the month: but what assurance had he that he would be able to go home at the end of a week? It might be sooner, it might be the day after to-morrow . . . but that depended. It depended, in the first place, on Warschauer-Waremme's coming to see him, on his eating humble pie, to a certain extent; and then one would have to get him . . . well, one would have to get

through his ribs; one would have to uncover his brain. That was what it depended on. There was, of course, no certainty. If he was left in the lurch, and had to wait in that enormous city, so monstrously alien, what could he do with forty-six marks? And now this devilish fever: a million metallic spangles glimmered before his eyes. These considerations flashed through his mind with lightning speed while Melitta, crouching on the stool, watched him nervously, heedless of the fact that her short skirt had slipped up over her thighs. To refuse when one was asked for help in such a matter was impossible. To close one's purse when it held what would save someone else: impossible. To lie, to explain "I haven't got it", or "I need it myself": that couldn't be done. In that case, Etzel might just as well have stopped at home with his Rie and let her make him apple-fritters; what was the point of all he was doing? . . . "All right," he said, "I'll give you the money"; and he fished the already rather shabby pocket-book out of the lining of his waistcoat, in which he had himself cut a pocket, which he had sewn as best he could, and handed Melitta two twenty-mark bills. Apparently she had not believed that he would do it; she had thought to herself that the attempt wouldn't do any harm; so she looked at him with some surprise. He and his circumstances appeared to her more mysterious, not to say more suspicious, than ever. "You really are a nice boy," she remarked, appreciatively; and then, with a last vestige of suspicion: "is it Kosher money?"—"Kosher? No, it's Christian money," he replied; "but from a damnably decent source."—"That's fine; thanks very much," said Melitta, and she thrust the money into her blouse as she got up. "Tomorrow morning I'll go to Silberbaum, and I'll show you the receipt."—"That's not necessary."—"Yes, it is. I might be cheating."—"For that you would have picked on someone else. I hope so, at any rate."—"Won't you tell me, Mohl, what your business really is?"—"I'm looking for my uncle, who ran away with some trust money."—"H'm. Not a very remunerative job, it seems to me."—"Nor to me; the bailiff's already in sight." (As we see, the "enlightened midget" had adjusted himself very

well to the idiom of his environment.) "Is that why you asked for someone whom you're expecting?" inquired Melitta slyly. "Is it perhaps your uncle himself? Do you think he will come of his own accord and plank down the money on the table?" She gave a tinkling laugh.—"No, the person who is to come is someone else. I have a bone to pick with him too. He doesn't come of bad people either. You saw him with me at the jazz concert the other day."—"Oh, that old chap—the suety one!"—"Yes, that's he. If he doesn't come it will be a mess, I can tell you. I have reasons for thinking he will come; if not to-day, then to-morrow. He knows where I am living. He even took a note of the address. He has no time during the day, so he'll have to come at night. Just let him in as soon as he comes. Tell your mother too to send him in to me at once. Tell everyone in the whole house; tell them all to say that I'm in . . . do you understand? It is frightfully important; as important as the underground railway, do you understand . . . ?"—"Look here, man," cried Melitta, startled, "either you are tipsy . . . or . . ."—"It is only that . . . it seems to me I'm . . ." stammered Etzel, "I'm a little sleepy, you know; why does the gas keep on roaring to-day?"

Melitta did not waste many more words; she helped him to undress, and when he was in bed she covered him up carefully. "No doctor," he murmured entreatingly, before he fell into a feverish sleep; "please don't get a doctor."—"Don't worry," said the girl, soothingly, "we'll get on without one. People of our sort don't rush for a doctor." There is something behind that, she said to herself; some reason why he should be so afraid of the doctor; but since he had done her such a service she resolved to look after him herself as best she could. She had a little household medicine-chest, in which there was some antipyrin; she dissolved two tablets in water, and gave it to him out of a spoon. A good-looking boy, she thought, considering his burning face.

2

He spent the night in a condition between unconsciousness and a whirl of racing thoughts. Melitta had left the door leading into

her room open, and from time to time she came in with a candle to look at him. He could not bear the light, and whimpered a little, putting his fingers over his eyes. The mechanical piano in the dancing-school across the courtyard sounded like a squadron of cavalry thundering over a battlefield strewn with sheets of corrugated iron. It was endless, endless. . . . The young woman outside Ghisels' door struck him in the face with a motor-horn. When he looked more carefully, it was not a motor-horn, but a saxophone, and the young man with the horn-rimmed spectacles said: "That's an unsuitable occupation for a centaur, young lady." His grandmother hovered before him like a trapeze artist suspended from a balloon, and Frau Schneevogt threatened her with her fist and cried bitterly: "If I had such an income, I could do that too! Andergast, tell me the date of the death of the last Hohenstaufen! Wrong! Sit down!" A woman swathed in black was walking on Trismegistos' arm down a horribly dismal street; there was an explosion, and paving-stones flew into the air; his father caught them in his hand, thrust them into his brief-bag as *corpora delicti*, and said to the black-swathed figure: "You are Anna Jahn! I arrest you in the name of the law." Then he was in an open goods waggon, travelling above the roofs of the city, and the rails ran up into the air like telegraph-wires; the waggon was empty except for a small packing-case, which, however, curiously enough, was transparent; and lying loose in the packing-case, like apples, were a lot of human heads; he recognized the head of the Paalzow boy, and of the negro Joshua Cooper. Then Camill Raff came and yelled to him: "Let us fly!" and seizing him by the wrist he ran panting towards a gate which might be shut any moment; then they would be lost. . . .

Melitta was obliged to go to work next morning; she entrusted her mother with the care of their sick lodger; but Frau Schneevogt also had her errands to do, so that Etzel was alone in the flat for the greater part of the morning. The fever had left him; he felt as though he had been beaten, and lay motionless with half-closed eyes. Like all children and half-children, when they are ill, he flirted with the idea of death, and pitied himself with all his heart

because he was so neglected and deserted. But the consideration that in all probability no one would ever learn of his death if he were to die wretchedly and anonymously in a horrible tenement in North Berlin rather robbed the idea of its sweet and melancholy charm. Neither his grandmother, nor Robert Thielemann, nor good old Rie, nor he, Trismegistos, would ever know. This indeed would be disastrous; Trismegistos would have to know. It was perhaps the only way of getting at him. Mohl, Edgar, of unknown birth and unknown antecedents; the corpse is to be seen in the morgue at Plötzensee. After a while his identity would be clearly established, and the oppressed mourners, tormented by the pangs of conscience, would make the pilgrimage to his grave. *Hic jacet Etzel Andergast, alias Mohl*, a victim of his honourable efforts, mourned by those who share his opinions. He did not, of course, know that this phase of self-pity meant that life was triumphantly returning. The sounds of the house, upstairs and down, the voices and steps that seemed to rise from a hollow abyss, the rattle of window-panes, the barking of dogs, the cries of the street vendors, the rattle of an aeroplane: he was back already in the midst of things, the nervous body of the world.

Etzel lifted his head and listened: that was the front-door bell. After a pause it rang again; another pause, and a third and longer ring. It was conceivable. He gave lessons only till eleven, and as a rule he did not go to Frau Bobike's before half-past twelve. Etzel felt in the pit of his stomach that it was he. He smiled; a tense, excited, thievish smile. All his resolution, all his expectations and fears were expressed in that smile. Should he get up and open the door? He had no sleeping-suit. How mother Schneevogt would have stared if he had put pyjamas into his weekly wash! Before he could get into his trousers the person outside might already have gone. He heard voices. Thank God, Frau Schneevogt had gone. And *his* voice. No doubt of that. That bass organ-like voice, those chest-tones, that trumpeted O!

Warschauer-Waremme entered. Behind him, agog with excited curiosity, was Frau Schneevogt. With arms uplifted in entreaty, Warschauer approached the bed. "Why, Mohl, my poor little

Mohl, are you really ill, seriously ill? I thought, why doesn't Mohl come? What's the matter with him? He can't really be angry with his old friend; he won't have taken a momentary fit of nerves too seriously? What's the matter? Head? Stomach? Throat? Lungs? Can I do anything for you? Fever. Poor fellow! My good woman, this is a very excellent young man; I hope you are looking after him, that he is not being neglected. . . ." An unchecked flow of words. He walked up and down the room, acting dismay, pity, eagerness to help. Frau Schneevogt, who was at once enormously impressed by him, gave him to understand, with an injured air, that both she and her daughter were doing all that was possible for the patient. "Excellent lady," said Warschauer; but he thought that the air of the room was bad, and opened the window. Then he went back to Etzel, laid his hand on his forehead, then on his heart, muttered anxiously, and clicked his tongue; and his black spectacles, under the brim of his slouch hat—which he had not removed—looked like the dark orifices of two pipes. "Make him some soup, my dear lady, if possible a little chicken broth, and get some simple laxative from the chemist: calomel or castor oil. Let him take that."—"I'll go at once, doctor," said Frau Schneevogt respectfully, believing him to be a physician. Etzel was obliged to laugh. Warschauer too grinned benignly. "Now you see; you see," he rejoiced, "you're in good spirits. Your impish nature coming to the surface. *Vivos voco*. My dear young Mohl, I must say good-bye for the present; tiresome duties call me; this evening I'll come again, and keep you company for a while.—Good-bye, my dear," he said in English. He waved his right hand affectionately, and turned to go. His grey coat-tails flapped grotesquely behind him. Frau Schneevogt accompanied him into the hall with a servile smile.

Etzel looked angrily at the door through which he had disappeared. That disgusting fuss! he thought; now what does he mean by it? Does he want, as usual, to put me off and lull my suspicions, or has he some special trick in mind? Well then, this evening. . . . Now it's *aut-aut*; I wish it were already midnight; I wish it were already to-morrow.

He thought out a plan, but of what use was a plan when one had such an opponent to deal with? Before you can trip him up he crushes your toes. The most promising way, probably, was to pretend to be worse than he was; to pretend to be really very weak. To behave as though the illness had reached a crisis, and that he could only begin to get better if he was rid of a certain mental and moral burden. A regular trap. All the passionate subtlety, all the Andergast obstinacy, all the boyish enthusiasm that was stored up in his heart and brain were now at work with dæmonic energy, preparing for the decisive hour. I do not, in this case, hesitate to use the hackneyed word; the dæmonic is a fundamental force in those natures which are capable of acting with innate integrity according to their lights, even though they possess a superficial veneer of intellectualism, or though, as Etzel was prone to do, they fail to appreciate their profounder energies, and rely on their imagination and their sense of logic. This is nothing but a clever insurance against associating more intimately with the dæmon in question, whose appearance upon the scene is always disquieting.

3

Towards half-past seven Melitta came home, and hurried to Etzel's room to inquire how he was. He replied that he was better, and she expressed her satisfaction; unfortunately, she added, she could not stay at home; at half-past eight there was to be a meeting of the employees of the millinery firm to discuss the question of the accident with the lift. She would, however, be back by ten o'clock for certain, to see how he was getting on. She had spoken to the lawyer Silberbaum, and had paid him the forty marks; the matter was in good hands. She showed him the lawyer's receipt, but he did not even look at the scrap of paper. "Mother is making you an omelette, and you'll have some tea with it. To-morrow morning you'll be over the beastly thing." There was suddenly something frank and companionable about the girl, which was an extraordinary contrast to her former shrewish and challenging manner; he, however, did not value

it very highly, since he regarded it as too cheaply earned. This led him into considering this "cheapness"; and he decided that one overestimated people if one criticized their naïveté on such occasions. One isn't primitive enough, he reflected seriously; one ought to be more primitive; one is like a lead-pencil with too sharp a point, which breaks off almost as soon as one begins to write.

Since Frau Schneevogt was eager in her persuasions, he ate half the omelette and had the tea put near his bed. No doubt the friendliness of his landlady also had its material motives, but that did not trouble him much; she was really too cheap (although it appeared next day, when he was about to pay his bill, that one miscalculates most readily in respect of those things which are most easily purchased). It was a quarter to nine when he finally heard the door-bell ring. "It's raining, my good Mohl," said Warschauer, as he came in, "I am dripping." He took off his hat and shook it, removed his coat and shook that also, looked about for a peg on which to hang them, and finally, after much sneezing and clearing of his throat, he laid them on the stool on which Melitta had sat the night before.

"Well, how goes it, how are you, my poor Lazarus?" he asked, and taking a chair by its back, he lifted it over the table, placed it beside the bed, and was about to sit down on it. "Hullo, what's that?" He stopped, and listened. It was the mechanical piano in the dancing-school, which had resumed its horrible din. "Crazy. And can you sleep with that, Mohl? My sympathy." He went over to the window, looked across the courtyard, and saw the distorted shadows gliding to and fro across the brightly-lit window-blinds. He laughed silently. "A pretty camera obscura," he said; "an illustrated Charleston; one can absolutely smell the sweat of pleasure, and what we are hearing pierces the ear like the trumpets of Jericho. I like that sort of thing. Here one is, right in the midst of events." Etzel sighed. Warschauer returned to the bed and looked at him with alarm. Here again he displayed the almost ludicrous exaggeration of which he had not yet entirely rid himself. "Would you mind speaking a little less loudly,

professor?" asked Etzel. "Certainly, of course; your nerves, of course," murmured Warschauer, looking as though he could not forgive himself for his lack of consideration. "As a matter of fact, this must be only a flying visit," he continued, with an eager gesture of the hand: "I would not be burdensome for anything in the world. Not for anything would I retard your convalescence. For you are convalescing, according to the satisfactory reports of the lady outside."—"I don't know," murmured Etzel; "I feel pretty bad again. . . . But, you know, professor, it's so miserable to be alone in this room, with that horrible music over there; and in any case I can't sleep; do stay a little longer. . . ."—"All right, all right, don't say another word; I'll stay as long as you like, Mohl. It would be a poor sort of friendship if I ran away. Shall I sit still? Shall I read to you? Shall we have a chat? You mustn't exert yourself in any way. I will provide the entertainment."

What is he up to? Why is he suddenly all honey again? Etzel wondered. For a moment he perceived the metallic, smouldering gaze behind the dark glasses, and a cold shudder ran down his spine. The brief silence lasted no longer than the pause between the opening and the shutting of a door. "I don't care about being entertained," said Etzel then, with the irritable self-pity of a feverish patient, "also, I have no idea of lying here in silence listening to you while you talk of indifferent things. It isn't a question of indifferent things at all."—"But of what, my sympathetic young friend?"—"Of the thing because of which you kicked me out the day before yesterday."—"Kicked you out is a harsh term. Really, dear Mohl, that's too crude a designation for an angry expression of impatience. If I had meant it so unpleasantly, should I be here? Could I sit beside your bed then with an easy conscience?"—"I don't know why you are here, professor; perhaps your conscience isn't so particularly good. I really don't know why you waste your time on me. What do you find in me? What interest can you take in me? And if you do find something in me, why do you play with me like a cat with a mouse?" Warschauer suppressed a smile. His jaw began to

munch. "What do I see in you, little Mohl? To be frank, I have not thought about it. I have too much of the animal about me in that respect." Etzel frowned. "I don't believe you, professor. You know every moment what you are doing, and why you are doing it."—"Ah, you regard me as an intriguer who looks far ahead?"—"Perhaps not that. But you are cleverer than I am, you are enormously cleverer than I am, and you are taking a mean advantage of me."—"That's impertinent, Mohl."—"It's the truth."—Warschauer said "H'm! H'm!" and then "H'm!" again, and adjusted his glasses. "You are exciting yourself unnecessarily, Mohl," he said. "You must not excite yourself. Have you a thermometer? Your eyes are suspiciously bright. Just be quiet; keep calm. I'll see what I can do for you. If it will make you easier. . . . I mean, about the definition of what attracts me to you. As a matter of fact, it's not simple. Your temperamental outbreak recently, which compelled me to an energetic, I admit a somewhat too energetic, measure, corroborated certain of my assumptions. I am playing with you, Mohl? That's a bold perversion of fact. It seems to me rather that you have been playing with me, or have tried to, at least. Honestly, now, how is it; how was it?"

Well, now we are in the thick of things, thought Etzel, with a mixture of fear and relief, and he clasped his hands under the bed-clothes. "Not a bit of it," he replied, in some confusion. "I told you at the very beginning what I want. It all began with my asking you whether you regard Maurizius as guilty. You evaded the question. Every time that I have spoken of it, you have either evaded me or made fun of me. As you did again the last time." Warschauer made a cynical grimace. "And what should have induced me to express my real opinion to any little whipper-snapper who comes along? Since we are talking seriously about the matter, you see I am taking you quite in earnest, as though I were addressing a delegate from some society for the protection of human rights; so that you cannot any longer complain of me. Now that we are amiably discussing certain conceptions, tell me what is the motive of your demand? Just a sentimental lower

middle-class story, whose clumsiness would merely have filled a hard-boiled old fellow like myself with pity, if it had not made him angry. You are blushing, Mohl; that's quite in order; it's very becoming to you, and suitable to your years; but if anyone wants to fool a Georg Warschauer, he must take a good deal more trouble about it, Mohl. He can't tell such a person the first trashy story that occurs to him; one that isn't even properly thought out. Do you understand?"—"You are quite right," whispered Etzel, dropping his eyes; "but what was I to do?"—"What were you to do? What I expect you to do now. There is one class of person to whom one owes the truth under all circumstances; namely, the person from whom one wants the truth. Do you understand that?"—"Yes, I understand that."—"Well, then! Clever boy!"

Etzel made several attempts to speak, while Warschauer watched him with an immovable, masklike face. The mechanical piano was grinding out a patriotic song. "I could not stand it, professor," he at last exclaimed, in a low voice, fighting for breath. "I read the petition for pardon which old Maurizius had written. Then I got him to tell me the whole story. I simply called on him. He gave me the reports, the newspaper-cuttings. But that wasn't necessary. He enlightened me as to a great many details, but from the very first moment I was convinced that the verdict was mistaken, that it was a gross miscarriage of justice. I was as certain of that as of the ten commandments, or that Martin Luther was not a swindler. I wasn't interested in the old man; he really left me cold; as a matter of fact, I even hated him and his petition for pardon. What does he mean by that? To whine for a pardon, to be satisfied with a pardon, when he himself is convinced of his son's innocence? I didn't want to say that to him—and what good would it have done?—but in my eyes he was merely an old fool; his protestations would not have made the slightest impression on me, if I had not been convinced with my whole heart that the man was innocent. And if you ask me how I reached this assurance, I can only answer: 'I don't know.' I only know that I am so convinced that all the courts in the

world would not make me alter my opinion. Perhaps you will understand me better if I tell you that I grew up in a house in which a verdict is what a sacrament is in a church. One often sees apparitions in the dark, does't one? A person can, under certain circumstances, reach a point where an event inspires him just like a thought; am I expressing myself clearly enough? Then it is stronger than any consideration, or any knowledge. When once the inspiration had got hold of me there was no stopping; it simply meant: that man must have justice, or I am done for. Do you understand now, professor? Now you have the truth."

He had spoken very slowly at the close, and had lifted his folded hands above the counterpane. His forehead, with a few moist strands of hair slanting across it, was like chiselled stone. Curiously enough, his mouth was drawn into a half-defiant, half-sickly smile. His face had suddenly lost its boyish look; for some minutes, indeed, there was a kind of suffering maturity in his features; his eyes were fixed with a steely intensity on the black glasses, behind which, to all appearance, nothing moved, nothing was happening.

"I fancied something of the sort," murmured Warschauer; "my deductions were in that direction. Saul went in search of donkeys and found a kingdom. Mohl set forth to seek justice and will have to be content if he finds donkeys. Don't look at me so contemptuously, my dear Mohl; that is not cynicism, but experience. I suppose I may still continue to call you Mohl, although from your revelations I must assume that it is a mere *nom de guerre*. All right; let it go at that. I have become accustomed to the name, as to a stimulant, and have no further curiosity. Certainly, for your years, you have not carried yourself badly. That's it . . . that's it . . . good material, exceptional stuff . . . damn it, little Mohl; why did you have to run across me; what devil got hold of you that you had to cross my path?" Etzel looked astonished. "Good Lord, I think it was a very logical devil!" he said, shrugging his shoulders. Warschauer cut the air horizontally with his flat hand. "I am not speaking of the fact that you came to me with a purpose, but that it was a murderous attack

upon me, yes, a murderous attack," he said, with such an angry face that Etzel was startled. "I can't understand you," he said. "I don't imagine you do understand, my boy; you're blinded by your purpose," was the brusque reply; "although up to the present hour I had flattered myself . . . Never mind. I had closed the account. I had balanced the books. I had no further use for events; I wanted no more sensations. Then you broke in upon the peaceful idyll. In the beginning of the first book of Samuel, there is a sublime saying concerning that Saul to whom I referred not long ago: God gave him a new heart." He looked darkly at his white, flaccid hands, which lay upon his knees. "All that is beside the point, professor," said Etzel harshly. Warschauer sprang up, walked across the narrow room, turned about, and sat down again. "All right, then let us speak of justice," he replied, with his chest curiously expanded, which gave him a boastful and, at the same time, an offended appearance.

4

Yes, there was something boastful and yet offended about him, which reminded one of a rejected lover who feels that he has given sufficient proof of his excellent qualities. But when he began to speak, the blazing fire of his intellect seemed to devour the unclean, repulsive, dangerous, ghoulish elements as never before. "Justice, the great mother of all things, as some author once put it. Perhaps it was I. In former days I loved such proud euphemisms. A clever prelate once said to me: 'Never appeal to justice if you want to get it.' Everyone must beware of that. One may demand anything of human society; it will make all kinds of concessions; but to demand justice is pure nonsense, for it has not the means of granting it. Nor is it organized for this. It is as though one tried to initiate a baby into the mysteries of the integral calculus, and while doing so forgot to give him the necessary milk. I crossed the Atlantic with a man who was on his way to the League of Nations; an orthodox Puritan from Boston. He said to me with enthusiasm: The task is to ensure justice among the nations. I laughed in his face. 'You have been

asleep and have passed a few stations,' I told him; 'you should have got off at Ellis Island and seen the barracks for the immigrants; and a little trip to Mexico would not have done you any harm either; you are going in the wrong direction.' He stared at me with his mouth open; he did not understand a word. All those who seek justice are always going in the wrong direction; whichever way they go it is always in the wrong direction. I suspect that it is a form of self-seeking cerebral excitement, intellectual power-mongering. Michael Kohlhaas is the most detestable figure in the world; no one outside of Germany can understand such a Prussian train of thought. The woman brought before Solomon, who demanded that the disputed child should be cut in two, is only the last logical consequence. Justice means cutting the child in two. Don't flare up, Mohl; it is as I am telling you; all your humane considerations don't amount to as much as a bottle of oil poured into the rapids of Niagara. Solomon was a wise man, but he reduced all apostles of justice *ad absurdum*, and made all the pacifists look ridiculous. Was there ever since the world began a just cause for war? Did ever a general fight a battle for the love of justice? Was any one of all the famous men who have invaded and stolen their neighbours' lands, or slaughtered masses of their fellows, ever called to account unless the act was unsuccessful? I advise you to think some time about the relationship, I almost said the affinity, between the conceptions of justice and of revenge. When and where in history were kingdoms ever established, religions founded, cities built or civilizations propagated with the help of justice? Do you know of a single case? I don't know of one. Where is the forum which will pass judgment on the criminal extermination of ten million Indians? Or the poisoning by opium of a hundred million Chinese, or the enslavement of three hundred million Hindus? Who stopped the ships full of captive negroes that sailed in fleets to the North American continent between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries? Who ever lifts a hand for the hundreds of thousands of people who perish in the copper mines of Brazil? What judge will undertake to punish those responsible for the

pogroms in the Ukraine? Do you want more examples? I am well stocked. You will object—it is indeed your moral panacea: one must improve things, one must change things. Stuff and nonsense! One does not improve things; one does not change things. ‘One’, that is. ‘Things’—that’s another matter. But there it is a question of development, all the way from the monkey to Pericles. The undertaking is too great, the individual too small, my dear Mohl. Presumption—what presumption! You can use your powers to better advantage, you representatives! For you certainly regard yourself as a representative. The spirit of the times? Of the generation? Do not deny it (Etsel was not thinking of denying it, or of saying anything at all; he was only listening with wide-open eyes); do not deny it; it is the fashion, it is the type. Every father’s son of you, every runaway boy who wants to make the world happy, must end by knuckling under and being glad if he is permitted to decree, from some official arm-chair, that the dung in some neighbouring Augean stable shall at all events not offend the nostrils of the public. They are soon cured of the idea that they have in this way accomplished any more than their despised progenitors. What is the use of crying for justice if the crass reality with which we are surrounded constantly and shamelessly reminds us that we live upon the fruits of injustice? Every mouthful of bread I eat, every mark that I earn, every pair of shoes I wear is the result of a complicated system of injustice and unrighteousness. Every human life and every human activity to-day presupposes a hecatomb of victims. You and people of your sort proceed on the hypothesis that there is a will to justice, an immanent idea of justice, so to speak. That is a mistake. A false conclusion. Humanity as a whole does not care a damn for justice. Humanity has no organ of justice. There are times when people intoxicate themselves with the idea: namely, the times when there is plenty of butter on their bread; but if dividends are in any way threatened by it, or if there is a slump on the Stock Exchange, their enthusiasm fizzles out, and even the noisiest frogs climb off their prophets’ perch and cease to croak. I once knew two bank directors from Leipzig, both in the same

bank. The bank went smash; countless families lost their savings. One of their directors, a decent fellow, turned over his whole fortune to the official receiver and faced his trial. And then he was locked up; he got three years' imprisonment. The other, a rogue to the day of his death, was able to slip through all the meshes of the law; he made safely off with his booty, and is to-day an admired nabob, covered with decorations, the pride of his fatherland. The poor servant-girl who in her despair chokes her newborn child gets no mercy from the law, but the other day a Mecklenburg noble poisoned his wife in order to inherit from her, and the attorney-general hesitated six months before charging him with the crime. Last year I was present in court when a woman was sentenced for procuring because she had allowed her daughter to keep her fiancé overnight. I shall never forget the terrible screams of that woman when sentence was pronounced; such lamentation for a life destroyed, such incomprehension of the ways of the world, I have never heard in any human voice. On the other hand, some idiotic jury somewhere has exculpated a woman who admittedly murdered her husband, because she wears fashionable clothes and employs high-falutin' language. If you can prove to me that in a single one of these cases anyone cared a pfennig as to whether justice was done, as the phrase runs, I'll give you ten thalers. You had the misfortune to have an inspiration, my dear Mohl, as you said yourself. You might have had seven, or seventy thousand, such inspirations; why did you have to have just this one? You are attaching too much personal responsibility to a chance discovery. You are over-reaching yourself. You are wasting your life, your mind, your strength and your time on a lost cause, a cause that's dead. Who is Maurizius; who troubles about Maurizius? What does it matter whether he is sitting in a penitentiary or in a flat, whether he is guilty or innocent? How does that line of Goethe's go? 'At the day of judgment it's only a fart.' To use the grand word 'justice' in respect of such a state of affairs is, upon my soul, like driving a coffee-grinder with a steam-engine."

All the colour had faded out of Etzel's face; his lips were

quivering, his chin was quivering; he was shuddering from head to foot, as his blazing eyes devoured the man before him. He had no longer any need to pretend to be sick, for he was sick, sick at heart and soul, sick with scornful contempt, with furious disappointment and bitterness. He made a senseless gesture as though he would have hurled all that he felt at the man's face, as one might pick up a stone in one's rage, to throw it at the man who has insulted one; then he stammered, as he writhed on his bed: "Why that . . . that . . . that is incredible . . . no one living can believe that . . . anything so infamous . . . no, anything so horrible . . . that one should have to listen to it . . . they pretend to be human beings . . . he talks and talks . . . O God . . . he pretends to be a human being . . . let him get out of here, this human being, goodbye . . . let him go!"

"Mohl!" exclaimed Warschauer, honestly frightened. He had evidently not expected this effect. "Water!" panted Etzel. "Yes, certainly, at once, my dear, precious boy," murmured Warschauer in dismay, and wandered clumsily round the room looking for the water-bottle. He found it at last, filled a glass, and brought it to the bed. Etzel gave a deep sigh and lay stiff on his pillows. "Come, come, come," said Warschauer; "my dear good boy, what is the matter? Control yourself, little Mohl; look at me, look at your friend. . . ."—"Hot," whispered Etzel, "I'm bad . . ."—"Yes, of course, my son, of course, you're hot . . . of course, we'll put a compress on you . . . fever, of course." Actually the boy's whole body felt like the tiles of an overheated stove. A mysterious phenomenon, for as a matter of fact Etzel had no fever. Had he such a stupendous control over his physical self that he could involve it in a psychical affect, merely because he wished his appearance to impress his antagonist? How much was dissimulation, and how much a last heroic attempt and surrender? Like a crazy man running a race, he held on towards the goal, unconscious in the midst of his icy consciousness. Warschauer dipped a handkerchief into the water-jug, wrung it out, returned to the bed, and stripped off the boy's shirt. Etzel lay there stiff and silent; he did not move. When he saw the boy's

naked body before him, Warschauer fell into an entranced contemplation. Behind the dark glasses there was a sinister glow, like two tiny black flames. He opened his mouth. He looked like a man bewitched who has begun a prayer and does not know how to proceed with it. "Little man," he whispered. "Boy, you boy . . ." Then Etzel seemed to wake up. Swiftly he seized Warschauer's two arms with his two hands. He looked at him with an indescribable glance, bold, wild, imploring and imperious. He dropped the man's arms, got up on his knees, and dug his fingers into the other's shoulders. Then he released his shoulders, snatched at the black glasses and tore them from Warschauer's face. He held the glasses in his left hand like a trophy. Kneeling there naked, with the glasses in his hand, he said: "I want to know everything. Do you hear me? I want to know what that was about the *deux ex machina*. You ought to tell me. I am worth it. Come, professor, who fired? Did she fire, did Anna Jahn fire? Yes or no? Yes or no?"

A dull, animal glance from the watery eyes was the answer.

5

A faint smile flickered over Warschauer's pallid face. He no longer had the strength to repulse the boy, who was as though beside himself. He gently took the glasses from Etzel's hand and laid them on the chair. He stroked the shoulders, the back and the hips of the beautiful, slender body, his teeth chattering as he did so. "Yes, yes, all right, she fired the shot," he said, with a kind of senile indulgence; "if you've set your heart on it, little Mohl, why should I conceal it from you. . . . Yes, she fired . . . what else was there left for her to do?" . . . Etzel clasped Warschauer's right hand in both of his. He slipped back on to the bed without releasing the hand. He was almost benumbed with happiness. He stared with passionate longing into those watery eyes. He had the feeling that so long as he kept his eyes fixed upon him, the man could not run away. Warschauer sat down upon the edge of the bed and, now and again protruding his lips and munching his jaw, in the same senile, almost babbling tone,

he recounted the details of what had taken place. That she was at bay. That she had completely lost her head. Three bloodhounds were after her: her brother-in-law, her sister, and he, Waremmé. That is how she regarded them; three bloodhounds. She saw no way of escape. He had given her the revolver that afternoon. He had said: 'One can never tell what may happen; it is a last resort.' He had not considered that in her despair she might kill herself. As a matter of fact she came near doing it. She admitted this to him later on. It was his magnetic will which had saved her at the last moment. He had had a premonition of something of the sort. He had walked up and down in front of the windows for an hour and a half. He was not in the club at all. He had left there an hour earlier than usual. The witnesses had either been mistaken or had been misled by his subsequent assertions. He had walked up and down under the side windows of the house for an hour and a half; he had kept his eye on the lighted windows, and from time to time he could see her shadow. He had learnt from experience that when he concentrated his thoughts upon her she would fall directly under his influence, and her will would become subject to his. She must, however, have heard his footsteps in the dead leaves through the half-open window. This roused her anxiety to a climax. She sat down at the piano, played something or other, broke off again, dashed down the steps, and telephoned to him, Waremmé, to his flat and to the club. In vain. 'For heaven's sake, Elli,' she screamed up the stairs in a paroxysm of terror; 'your husband is coming; come down, or something terrible will happen!' Thereupon Elli rushed down the stairs, flew at her sister like a mad woman, seized her by the throat, and hissed at her: 'Be off this instant, or I'll strangle you!' At that moment the garden door banged; Elli rushed out, and Anna, feeling as though drained of every drop of her blood, staggered after her. "At that moment I walked out from behind the house towards the steps," concluded Warschauer; "at the moment the shot was fired. What happened after that is of no further interest. It accords fairly well with the facts, which have been sufficiently masticated. I, of course, took

the revolver and made away with it.”—“But first you went towards Maurizius with the revolver?” asked Etzel, breathlessly. —“Yes.”—“In order that it should look as though you had taken it out of his hands?”—“Yes, of course. A most observant boy!”—“But how is it possible that Anna Jahn allowed him to be arrested, to be condemned; how is it possible that for nineteen years she . . . I can’t grasp it . . . how could she do such a thing? How could anyone?” Warschauer looked sidelong at the floor. “That . . . is a secret of her nature. I can only give inadequate explanations. I have already said: ‘I was dealing with a corpse. A corpse which I had to galvanize in order that it might simulate life.’ I never took my eyes off her. During the whole preliminary investigation, while she was in the south, I was close at hand.”—“But later, later, those many years later? Professor, professor, just think!” Warschauer let his eyes wander along the wall as though he was trying to count the blood-marks caused by the bed-bugs. Suddenly he looked straight into Etzel’s face, and said, with an uneasy frown: “That goes very deep. One can scarcely decipher the structure of that soul. In this direction my influence encountered a pre-formed resolution. I am now going to say something which no one in the world knows except you and myself. It may at first seem that it is something very ordinary, but in view of the personality concerned, it is very extraordinary. It was that which made me the final arbiter. When I understood the situation, I felt as though a giant had seized me and broken my spine. The truth was, she loved the man; that was it. She loved him so, with such a furious passion, that her mind became clouded, and she became incurably ill. For her it was the last extremity, this love; it was the leap into Orcus. And he, he did not know it. He hadn’t even a notion of it. He for his part merely loved her, the unhappy man; but he begged and whined and wooed her, whereas she . . . she had already taken the plunge. That he did not know it—that she could not forgive. That she loved him so infinitely—she never forgave either him or herself for that. For that he had to suffer punishment. He must no longer be in the world. That she had shot her sister for his sake

must never, under any circumstances, build a bridge from him to her. She had made this an iron law for herself, and she immured herself in it. She created his death; she created his expiation; she was his most cruel persecutor; and in order to bear his life and his punishment with him, she transformed herself into a soulless fury. At the same time she had a bourgeois pride, and with it a bourgeois cowardice, such as one would scarcely find again so combined in one person. For the age which permitted such creatures to flower is a thing of the past. When she first saw her name connected with the whole affair in the papers, although she was treated with the utmost delicacy, it had the most extraordinary effect upon her; for hours and hours she kept on washing her hands, and felt a disgust which culminated in fits of convulsive shuddering. No, Mohl, you cannot understand that character; and I must say, heaven forbid that you should. A savage pagan and a silly bogot, full of arrogance and a passion for self-destruction; chaste as an altar-piece and ablaze with a mystic, primeval, obscure sensuality; austere, and hungering for tenderness; surrounding herself with insurmountable barriers, hating anyone who attempted to break them down, hating him who respected them—and all this, above all, under an evil star. There are many people who live under an evil star. They lack light. They desire their dark fate, and entice it, and challenge it, until it comes forth and tramples them underfoot. They want to be crushed by it. They will not give way; they will not yield themselves; they want to be trampled on. That was how it was with her. Well, that had to be. Only be patient, Mohl, I am coming to what you really want to hear from me. The oath. . . . I know, I know. . . .” He got up, and collided with the chair; his glasses fell from it; he leaned over and picked them up; one lens was broken; he shook his head and put them in his pocket. Then he walked over to the window, looked for a while out into the rain, and turned about. “The oath was nothing more than a matter of attitude and a technical consequence. It is difficult to maintain one’s attitude with a broken spine; nevertheless, it had to be. I was standing on a heap of ruins, and there was no doubt as to

who was to be the last victim. At least, not for me. It was not for me to measure the value of one human life against another; the question was: where in this utter darkness is there still a spark of future; what can be saved from the débâcle? Between Leonhart Maurizius and myself there was a duel to be fought; not a knightly duel, but a duel of fate. Fate against fate. If I remained the victor in this battle between us two, it was fate that made the decision. Do not believe that one can do that with a strong conscience alone; the magic sign is necessary too; the sign that one receives from the invisible spirits. Conscience alone, perhaps, would not hold out, but the call does its work; one hardly knows whether it comes from heaven or hell, even while one hears it. The dark star: that one does not see. Guilt . . . yes, certainly. Guilt is relative and unfathomable; a magic globe which reflects only the person who recites the Jewish-Christian abracadabra while he gazes. To-day it looks like guilt. There are hours . . . sometimes at nights . . . one weakens with the changes of the moon. If I had won a kingdom, the kingdom of this world, as once it seemed I might, then there would be no guilt in me. It would have been atoned for. As it is, the game is lost. Are there really things between heaven and earth of which philosophy does not even dream? Or, to enlarge the meaning, of which it can *only* dream? Sometimes at night . . .? Mohl, Mohl, I fear that we are all pitiful creatures, all cut out of the same block, and all just good enough for the worms. A sad bit of knowledge. A sad conclusion."

He sat down on the edge of the bed—Etsel meantime had covered himself up to his chin—took the boy's hand, and said: "I haven't hesitated to tell you the truth, since you set your whole soul upon it. Why shouldn't I give you the satisfaction? It is of no practical value to you; the perjury is long superannuated. God . . . yes, . . . really, in the last analysis I am indifferent to everything; nothing is any longer of any importance to me in this life. If I examine myself carefully, I am quite indifferent to it. But I would like to keep the steering-wheel in my hand a little while longer. So don't give way to exaggerated hopes. Even if you were to bring my confession before a court of law, it would

not do you any good." (He smacked his lips gloatingly.) "Your judicial mechanism is so rusty that people will think twice before they exhume a sacrosanct corpse, because a seventeen-year-old madcap kicks up a row. Moreover, I am still the man who makes his own laws, and does not absurdly hazard all his bourgeois prospects, shabby as they may be, for the sake of a belated passion. For I have a passion for you; that I will frankly confess, my boy. I should be ungrateful to fate if I did not do so. You have taken my withered heart in both your hands, and incidentally, and without my being able to prevent it, you have lifted it up into a wonderful light. For the sake of that you deserve a crown. No hard feelings, Mohl." He got up. "Moreover, I shall soon disappear from the present stage. Somewhere in Polish Silesia a daughter of mine is living, married to a civil service clerk; I haven't seen her for twenty-three years; I should like to see how she is getting on. You know, out East, out East there. Perhaps I shall find some sort of resting-place there. A sort of home for my old age. And you will understand that for this purpose I must take a moderately clean name with me. Those people have the right to ask that of me. But if you are able to find me up there a second time, you glowing little standard-bearer, then I shall perhaps be ready to make a valid statement. Then, for everything is possible, perhaps after all I'd help you to set the decrepit Goddess of Justice on her legs again, by surrendering my unworthy self. *Pereat Warschauer, fiat mundus*. Just see to it, though, that you get there half an hour before my decease." With a dry laugh he picked up his coat and hat. "Well, it's late again. Au revoir, young Mohl. To-morrow I'll look in for news of you. I hope you'll be well by then. How do I get out?" Etzel slipped into his nightshirt and replied: "One can go through the tavern downstairs; it's always open." His voice had so altered that Warschauer turned round again in surprise. The same change showed in Etzel's face: a cold, clear resolution. "H'm! *Sol!*" said Warschauer, and he went out. Etzel heard him groping his way through Melitta's dark room; then two doors banged, and all was quiet.

He lay on his back and looked at the ceiling. He felt as light as a floating feather, as free of the earth. But the thoughts which were passing through his head were dark and heavy. Ten minutes perhaps had gone by, and he had not yet been able to make up his mind to put out the gas, when the door creaked, and then opened softly, and Melitta, wrapped like a flagstaff in her ridiculous green shawl, stood on the threshold. She did not cross it, but stood there looking at Etzel with a tense, keen, searching expression. Etzel moved his head a little towards her and returned the look: "Did you hear?" he whispered. She nodded. "Everything—did you hear everything?" he repeated in a whisper; it was not very clear why he did not speak aloud. She laid one forefinger on her lips and replied: "Pretty well."—"That is good," said Etzel; nothing further.

"There is a storm coming," said the girl. At that moment the mechanical piano ceased to play for a moment, and a low rumble of thunder was actually audible across the roofs. Melitta closed the door again. Etzel stood up in bed and turned off the gas. He wrapped himself up in the blankets, and said to himself: "Good-night, E. Mohl"; and he at once fell into a sleep as quiet and profound as that of a little child. When he woke in the morning he pinched a disgustingly bloated bed-bug off his sleeve, sighed deeply, and said: "Good-morning, Etzel Andergast."

It was seven o'clock; he jumped out of bed and began to pack his belongings. Three hours later he was at the station.

CHAPTER XV

I

IN the office there was a young State attorney who had been attached for some months to the penal department. He had undertaken the task of explaining to the convict Maurizius the conditions under which his discharge was to be effected. "Do you accept?" inquired the attorney, not without some slight curiosity: with regard to the man, not to his answer. Maurizius, standing stiffly, gasped. "What conditions are proposed?"—"They are not expressly stated."—"So on some pretext or other I could be sent back to prison?"—"I think it is a mere formality. If you behave as the situation requires. . . ."—"You mean if I don't make any trouble for the courts."—"I have no instructions in that respect."—"What is the duration of this condition?"—"A year and a half. To be precise: one year and five months. Until the termination of the twentieth year of punishment."—"So that if I aroused the displeasure of the authorities, I might have to make up these seventeen months?"—"Theoretically, yes. But as I have said, it is a formality."—"And if I refuse now, shall I be released unconditionally in seventeen months' time?"—"Undoubtedly," replied the young attorney, embarrassed and somewhat annoyed. At the word "refuse", Superintendent Pauli looked up in surprise, and the inspector, standing behind him, shook his head discreetly. "So they want to keep a hold over me," murmured Maurizius.

"Do you accept or not?" asked the lawyer, sharply, pointing to a document on the table, which was waiting to be signed. The excited clerk could no longer bear to sit quietly on his stool. He got up and stared eagerly at Maurizius. The latter did not move. There were brick-red patches on his cheek-bones. One shoulder was trembling. He opened his mouth, but could not speak. They were all looking at him. Suddenly he made a gesture as though he were about to throw himself on the floor. But he was only trying to walk over to the table. He held on to the edge of it. The clerk handed him a pen. Maurizius dipped it in the inkwell,

looked at it for a moment in a distracted fashion, and then wrote his name on the document; the clerk pointed with his finger to the place where the signature was required. One sigh from four throats was heard in the room, like a gentle breeze. "To-morrow morning at eight you may leave," said the superintendent. "At seven o'clock the cell inspector will call for you to change your clothes."—"May I be permitted to telegraph my father?" asked Maurizius, in a choking voice. The attorney and the superintendent exchanged a glance of doubt. "We should prefer that you did not," said the attorney. "We wish to avoid all unnecessary excitement."—"But I shan't know how to get on outside. . . ." The attorney smiled. "That's simple enough. When you are once at the station . . . why, good heavens!"—"You could telegraph your father that you will be home to-morrow, in the course of the day," suggested Pauli, with a feeling of compassion. "It's only that we don't want him to come here; so that the hour of your discharge may not become known in that way. The papers would make a sensation of it." Maurizius replied: "In that case I shan't do it at all." The warder who took him back to his cell—the one who looked like a drunkard—asked graciously: "Well, how do you feel about it?" When Maurizius stared at him, with lifeless eyes, he cleared his throat and trotted off.

2

At eight o'clock in the morning.—Still fifteen hours. How could one live through them? He looked at the walls; he looked at the black stove-pipe. He walked forward a few steps, and told himself that while he was doing so, time was passing. He passed his hands over the bristles of his beard, and wondered whether he could still get shaved that day. Surely that would be allowed. It would pass the time. He would consider it. That again helped to pass the time. He seized the table and pulled it two yards to the left. He placed a chair in front of it. Why he was doing this was not clear to him. He sat down, opened the *Chronicle of Rothenburg*, and read: "April 4, 1659, the citizens fired on two windows of the old fort and a corporal's squad went forth with drums and

fifes." He calculated: 1659, that is; two hundred and eighty-six years ago; now there are fourteen and three-quarter hours to be lived through. If one closed one's eyelids and pressed one's thumbs tight against one's temples, a moment came when one was suddenly conscious of the quick passing of the hours; he had often experienced it. To-day that method was an utter failure. What was patience? The ebbing of one's blood. To forget that one willed, that was patience. Unhappy man—so you are willing again! He stood up, dragged the table to the window, and then the chair; he sat down again, and read: "On the 29th of July a foreign maid, twenty years of age, with her mother, was exposed in the pillory, led through the city by the hangman, and expelled from the country (because she had, at her mother's instigation, stolen one hundred thalers from a man, Herr Daniel Rücker, hospital chaplain, whom she had served three-quarters of a year). The daughter screamed and cried pitifully; she had wished to return the iniquitous money to the source from which it had come: in the war Rücker was chaplain with Bernhard von Weimar."—A far distant time; the wheels had rolled on; the human misery had long been sighed away.

He closed the book. He felt a sudden horror of looking into the past, of learning of bygone things. All the past is like a prison; what is to come is boundless space. But where does what is to come begin? When fourteen and a quarter hours have staggered by, like heavily laden draught-horses, or now? With every single *now*? And this *now*: it is that which lies between heart-beat and heart-beat, or between second and second: eighty-six thousand four hundred pauses of weariness and despair every day. . . . Now there was again a to-morrow. He whispered the word "to-morrow" with hesitating lips; it was like the gleaming speck of white light when one is passing through a tunnel; slowly, indescribably slowly it expands; the circle widens; the brilliance of the gleam lessens; slowly, very slowly, in spite of the terrific speed of the train. . . . To this to-morrow another morrow is linked; a third, a fourth, a fifth; every *now* becomes a *then*, every *is* becomes a *was*. . . . Thirteen and a half hours. . . . He walked

round and round the cell . . . twelve and a quarter hours. He counted his steps. In the grey twilight of the cell an image hovered like a blossom hewn out of purple stone. To-morrow. That crystalline to-morrow. That unlooked-for to-morrow, the thought of which made him quiver with irrational rapture, with irrational terror. . . . Roads, streets, doors. Walking along. The sky: a flawless dome. Towers, trees, gardens. A woman. . . . He struck his hands together. A shudder ran through all his limbs. A woman. . . .

Eleven and a half hours. He threw himself on the iron bedstead, and gave himself up to the tormenting sweetness of a dream which he dreamed with open eyes.

3

There was, so he fancied, so he dreamed, a heart in the world which was longing for him. Hildegard, who had grown up among strangers, was waiting for the day which would unite her to her unknown father. Up to her fifteenth year his name was never mentioned before her. When she was twelve, she overheard a whispered conversation between her foster-mother and a worthy old gentleman who had taken an interest in the child, and after that she divined everything. On her fifteenth birthday her foster-mother told her, considerably, what it was necessary for her to know. She was at once convinced of his innocence. She did not talk about it; she was careful, for her part, never to mention him; but in her strong magnanimous heart the belief was always growing that some day he would stand justified before the world; as well as that still stronger conviction—which compared with all else was insignificant—that he would come for her and take her away with him. She would make him happy. She would blot out the memory of all that he had suffered. It would be like effacing the writing from a slate with a wet sponge. The plans which she was making for her own life had no other aim than to make amends to him for his sufferings. She was waiting for him; she was longing for him with the absolute longing of a child. She was waiting for him to be rehabilitated. . . . His brain

worked on, incessantly, weaving the dream, throwing all experience, probability and reality overboard; and what rose from the depths had all the simplicity of a child's fairy-tale, of a boy's longings and a boy's anticipations on a Christmas Eve.—She was young: not the sort of girl to hang her head; it would be a mistake for her to live the life of a nurse, to renounce the joys of love and marriage for his sake; she would choose a husband who was willing to share with her the task of offering the “resurrected” man a house and home. There would be children, sweet fair-haired grandchildren; the house would be full of cheerful life; they would spend pleasant and sociable evenings in the friendly rooms. . . .

But what would their first meeting be like? The shadowy, hypothetical dream-picture took on definite outlines. With a sovereign unconcern, his imagination recast his first conception—that Hildegard was not to marry yet awhile, not until she had been united to her father for a year. For some altogether excellent reason, which remained, however, quite obscure, she had decided to marry at once, and, as chance would have it (or was some secretly festive intention at work?) the wedding was to take place a few days after his release. It seemed almost as though his release was to be celebrated in this manner.

But he can no longer arrive at the church in time for the ceremony. When he enters the house where the young couple are expecting him, all the guests are already assembled. His appearance causes quite a sensation. Servants whisper and hurry hither and thither. His coat and hat are taken; he is ushered in; the folding doors are opened, revealing a drawing-room full of guests. Every face is turned towards him. Astonishment, awe, pity, and respect are visible on all those faces. An orchestra which has been playing hitherto ceases to play, and a silence ensues, like the silence on the stage when one who was believed to have been lost returns to his family and friends after many years of hardship. An old man with a yellow beard, very distinguished-looking, rather resembling the warder Klakusch, approaches him, bows, and shakes his hand. Maurizius cannot utter a word; he is too

profoundly moved. His glance travels over the room, questingly; where is she? Where is Hildegard? Then he hears a low cry from one end of the room; the whole bridal party is seized with glad excitement; a path opens through the midst of the guests, and a white-clad figure, with flowing veil and outstretched arms, flies joyfully towards him. He presses her to him, clasps the warm loving body to his heart, the happy face against his cheek . . . now everything may still turn out well. Now one can forget. One is transformed and renewed. . . .

Minute after minute falls silently into eternity, like loosened stones into an abyss. They have been doing this now for eighteen years and seven months, and now they lie in the incomprehensible depths of the darkness, a heap of débris. . . .

The dawn was breaking.

4

He bade good-bye to the superintendent and inspector; they shook hands with him and wished him good luck; the iron door closed behind him, and he was standing alone in the sunlight. The street had a downward slope; his feet sought a level surface; the adjustment required a certain amount of effort. After he had walked some twenty steps he found it difficult to convince himself that he need not turn round; the feeling was there in his legs, the compulsion to turn round; he had to struggle against it for days. That one could walk straight ahead, that one was expected to walk straight ahead, was at first terrifying. It felt as though one had been tossed into the air and was desperately thrashing about with one's arms and legs. Too much breath entered into one's lungs. Everything was a little heavy: the light, the sky, the unaccustomed clothes, the hard leather of his shoes. One walked with the jerky steps of a puppet. After a little while he was tired; he stood still and looked about him; he felt so helpless. People stared at him curiously. He smiled. They turned away without returning his smile. He must find some neutral expression to please them.—“Is this the right way to the station, please?” “The first turning to the left; the second to the right.”—“Thank

you.”—But why turn back? Straight on, man, straight ahead! Children! There were children standing over there! He too stood still, turning pale. They were very small, those children. Astonishingly dwarfish. And there . . . two women. He had to lean against a shop window; feeling behind him for support, he came near breaking the glass. The shop-keeper came out and snapped at him angrily. He apologized, far too humbly. For a moment he felt an insane desire to seize hold of these women, to touch their breasts; but he pulled himself together; his expression became serious, almost sinister. From that moment onwards this serious, almost sinister expression was his mask, and the more fiercely the impressions of the visible world beat in upon him, the more impenetrable became the mask. With this mask he passed through the crowd, and stood on the station platform; with this serious, almost sinister, unapproachable and immovable expression, his eyes half-closed, his lips drawn in a little, he sat in his corner of the railway-carriage. Every time he saw a woman wearing a short skirt and light silk stockings a faint flush spread over his forehead, and his nostrils quivered. This was new to him. Everything was different. Everything had changed. Did people still speak the same language? He listened. They were the same words, but it seemed to him that they had a rhythm and a tone which was unfamiliar to his ears. He began to wonder and to feel uneasy; had the lapse of time which had deprived him of all connection between the days before his imprisonment and the present left too great a gap? Was it only his eyes and ears which were affected, or was his whole organism unable to bridge the chasm? A sense of discomfort overcame him, and increased, until he felt cold and desolate.

At Hanau he left the train. For some time he wandered about the streets. The cloudless sky glistened like a molten mass of lead; to walk in the sun was extraordinarily tiring; the glare blinded his eyes. He halted before an optician's window, hesitated, went in, and asked for a pair of spectacles. He was shown six or eight pairs; he chose one with dark glasses. The rims were of metal. The salesman recommended horn; they were fashion-

able and looked smarter. Very well, he nodded; he took the horn-rimmed glasses and put them on at once. He felt safer in the glasses; more confident; his discomfort was lessened. He looked in the mirror. For a long time he could not avert his eyes from the pale face with the dark glasses.

A quarter of an hour later he stood in front of the house in the Marketgasse. He looked for the flat. An old woman told him to go up the wooden stairs in the courtyard. Fear and anxiety made hard work of climbing the stairs. The word 'father' was a thing forgotten. A relic of a previous world. He felt neither joy nor anticipation; only the fear that he would be expected to display feelings which he did not possess. He asked himself whether that sort of feeling had not altogether died within him; but when he thought of Hildegard he answered the question with a passionate negative. But perhaps "Hildegard" was only an idea. An empty form, created by himself; a figure which did not exist in reality, but which he had imagined in the illusion of possession? It was the first time that he had been conscious of such a doubt, and he cast it from him as though he had polluted something sacred. (Whence did it come, this confidence, for which he had not the slightest foundation; when he ought, on the contrary, to have told himself that everything possible would have been done to sever all outward and inward ties between the child and himself?—which would not have been difficult, considering the whole situation. The solution to this conundrum lies in the region where human nature ceases to be rational, and where, surrounded by dark primeval forces, it escapes into a life behind life.)

He pulled the bell. A stony minute went by. In the courtyard below a cat mewed complainingly. Footsteps behind the door. A mumbled inquiry; the door was opened; the father and son stood confronting one another. The old man stared, motionless. His face flushed scarlet; he swayed forward, his hands feeling for the door-posts. "I knew, of course," he said in a wheezing voice; "I read it in the papers. Didn't think you . . . already . . . to-day . . ." The rest was drowned in a sob. It sounded like a hoarse, tight cough; he did not cover his face, and the tears trickled out of his

astigmatic little eyes. Leonhart Maurizius remained curiously cold. His features maintained their severe, almost sinister expression. Why am I not touched? he thought, as he took the old man by the arm and led him back into the room. He looked round him. When he saw the dismal poverty of the dwelling, a strange fear took possession of him. He had not yet thought about his future life. He had by no means regarded his father as rich; moreover, he had heard while in prison that not only the well-to-do, but even those of moderate means had become destitute on account of the depreciation of currency; apparently this had been his father's fate, or he would never have been compelled to take refuge in such a hole. And thereupon there emerged into the foreground of his mind considerations as to his future means of livelihood, transforming his vague uneasiness into a perspiring anxiety. For this meant being dependent upon people, applying to people; it meant answering questions, accepting favours, little bits of favours after the outrageous favour to which he owed his liberty; that unspeakably longed-for condition which he was constantly seeking to grasp and to realize, of which he had succeeded in achieving only a dismal premonition, like the knowledge which a sleeper possesses of the room in which he sleeps. In an impulse of generous enthusiasm he had given all the money which he had saved from his earnings in prison, with the exception of fifty marks, to the prisoners' aid fund. It was a small sum, but it would have helped him to make a beginning; here there seemed to be actual need.

This anxiety was unfounded, as he discovered within the next fifteen minutes. For a long while the old man gazed at him, lost in adoration. The leathery cheeks under the grey bristles of beard were still quivering; he grasped his stiff left arm with his right hand; he was unable to speak. Leonhart's glance travelled over to the table, where a number of documents were lying; beside them was an open newspaper, showing one of the inner pages, on which was printed, in large letters, the telegram which announced his release to the world. Above it, in large sprawling letters, written in blue pencil, were the words: "Praised be Jesus

Christ!" The blue pencil was still lying on the newspaper. That suddenly touched him; the pencil really more than the words; there is something singular about inanimate objects; sometimes, in their immobility, they still retain a spark of animate humanity. Now the old man recovered himself, and pointing to the documents, said, as drily as possible: "That is yours; that is all yours." He had waited for this moment for years and years, and now he stood there like a bashful lover, devoured with impatience, who is laying a costly gift, which for him is the epitome and expression of his devotion, in the hands of his beloved. He at once fell into a hasty, almost humorous bustle of activity, turned the pages, explained, and mentioned figures; this was the credit account; here were the monthly statements, and there was the amount of the interest. This was his will; everything was ready, since noon that day, in perfect order. Leonhart stared and stared. "And you?" he asked, with an eloquent gesture that embraced the room. The old man laughed, like one who is caught cheating at cards. He cleared his throat, coughed and spat; he kept on laughing, a furtive, bleating laugh. Leonhart bowed his head. From outside, above the screeching of old women and the tooting of motor-horns, came the prolonged call of a bugle. He dropped into a chair, visibly tired, and the question: "Where is Hildegard; do you know?" rose to his lips. The old man concealed his disappointment that Leonhart should show so little pleasure in his accumulated fortune—for it was after all a fortune—but since he could answer the question, and Leonhart would thus perceive that he had thought of this too—that he had been working for him in every direction—he was once more full of pride, and, nodding importantly, he gave the desired information: The girl had been in a Belgian boarding-school until the June of the previous year; then—according to his investigations—she had gone to Paris and the south of France with some friends. She had an unusual musical talent, and was to be trained as a singer; since the middle of May she had been visiting a married niece of Mrs. Caspot's in the country, at Kaiserswerth on the Rhine; there she would remain until the

autumn, and then she was to go to a teacher of singing in Florence. Kruse was the name of the family with which she was living.

Leonhart brooded in silence. "I shall go there to-morrow," he said suddenly. "So soon?" asked the old man. "Do wait a little!"—"It must be to-morrow." He rose; he was nervous and restless. The dim half-light in the room irritated him. He wanted to go out. He hinted that he would like to see to his wardrobe; he had nothing to wear; not even a shirt, except the one on his back. The old man tittered with amusement. That had already been attended to. He had been to a shop in Frankfurt the day before; he had bought things there. Everything had been seen to; everything was tip-top. He stalked over to the door opening into his bedroom; a hole of a place. There, lying on the bed and on the chairs, were suits, a cloak, all sorts of underwear, shoes, ties, hats. He stretched out his stiff arm triumphantly. It was the second great moment of happiness that day which transformed him into an all-providing deity. Now Leonhart seized his hand and held it in his own for a while. "Go and look at the things," the old man urged him. "If anything doesn't fit, we will change it; if there is anything wanting we will buy it." He pulled his pipe out of his pocket, and after several attempts succeeded in filling it. His legs were trembling. "Just go and look," he said, poking his son's ribs with his forefinger; "meanwhile I'll rest a bit." As he dropped heavily on to the sofa, Leonhart went into the bedroom, more to please the old man than because it tempted him. But looking at all those things released a feeling of tension within him; they were the necessary means of creating a distinction between himself and the world. There were even silk shirts and silk socks; he felt the material; his glance fell on the wardrobe, both doors of which were open; inside were hanging the suits which he had worn nineteen years ago. There was his frock-coat, his fur overcoat, a brown tweed shooting-jacket; it was like a house in which mementoes of a dead person had been preserved; a chance train of thought suddenly brought before him the lady with the white picture-hat whom he had noticed on the last day of his trial, and whose face had struck him because of a

certain expression of physical pain. Not once in nineteen years had he thought of her or seen her before him; now the picture was almost too lifelike; that impression of physical suffering made it singularly vivid; he could see, too, the little scar on her upper eyelid, and the cameo round her neck. He felt as though he must go down into the street at once; if he left the house he would surely meet her; he went back into the living-room, intending to tell his father that he thought he would go out after all; but the old man was huddled peacefully in a corner of the sofa; his pipe, which had grown cold, was in his hand; his chin was sunk on his breast; the grey bristles of his beard looked like moss. The wen on his head was like a little glow-lamp. Leonhart bent down to listen to the old man's breathing; something in the pose seemed to him not as it should be. . . . No, this was no sleep. The old man was dead.

5

Compelled by this event to exert himself, Maurizius became painfully aware of his helplessness, and of that which he regarded as a barrier between himself and the world about him. The interview with the doctor, the official notification of the death, the removal of the corpse, the funeral, the burial arrangements, the drawing of money, and all the formalities connected therewith, visits to the lawyer, consultations with the landlord, explanations, signatures—all this was sheer torture to him. And the newspaper men tracked him down; from them he fled and hid. It was six days before he could get away. He spent the night in Cologne. At eleven o'clock in the morning he arrived in Kaiserswerth, and asked for a family by the name of Kruse. He was directed to a country-house close to the bank of the Rhine. He drove thither and rang the bell of a tall garden gate; an elderly woman appeared. He would like to speak to Frau Kruse. On what business? A private, personal matter. Whom was she to announce? Art-dealer Markmann, from Frankfurt. He was so deathly pale, so distraught, that the woman looked at him suspiciously. She disappeared. He waited. His throat was dry as sand; he was

forced to swallow constantly. An enormous Great Dane trotted idly across the lawn, stopped, looked at him intently, growled, and stood on the alert. The woman returned, and regretted that the lady of the house had gone out; would he please communicate with her in writing? He replied that he was going abroad. She shrugged her shoulders. He asked, with such foolish urgency that it was bound to arouse suspicion, whether the lady would be visible after lunch; the matter which had brought him there was important. An evasive answer. When he had already decided to go he turned back, and against his will, although he realized instantly that this was a piece of stupidity which betrayed his purpose: "Does Fräulein Körner live here?" The woman became embarrassed, gazed at him more searchingly than ever, and, replying that she could not say, slammed the gate in his face. So there was no doubt that his visit had been expected, and that measures had been taken accordingly. It seemed to him that he was being watched from one of the windows of the house. He could see a curtain moving. He had had an obscure premonition, which he had been unwilling to admit, scaring his thoughts away from it as one chases flies from a dish of sweetstuff; now it was slowly becoming a certainty; they intended to keep him apart from his child. And if such an intention existed, if anyone had had courage and the callousness to plan such a thing, then he might expect that it would be carried out with merciless consistency. They would not confine themselves to mere attempts and negotiations; they would do the thing thoroughly, and his disdainful reception at the gate did not permit him to hope for a more amicable sequel. What was he to do, what in God's name was he to do? Did Hildegard know that he had returned to the world? Did she even know of his existence? Perhaps she regarded him as dead. Perhaps she did not even know his name. What justification had he for thinking of her as a creature who belonged to him? Had he indeed any claims upon her, except those which he had assumed in dreams which were far removed from the reality? But what if she did know of his existence, and was prevented by force from seeing him? Such a prohibition must in the

long run prove futile. What was he to do? What could he do? He walked up and down along the avenue in front of the villa, obsessed by wilder and more desperate thoughts than had ever before tortured his brain; he could not suppress them, could not dispel them. After two hours of this he went back to Düsseldorf. When he reached his hotel he went to the telephone.—“This is Villa Kruse.”—“This is Victor Markmann, who wishes to speak to the lady of the house.”—“She is at the telephone; what is it?”—“It is a question of an interview with Fräulein Körner.”—“Fräulein Körner has gone away.”—“Gone away? Since when? Where has she gone?”—“We cannot give any information as to that.”—“I have a message for her, an urgent message, which cannot be delayed.”—“From whom?”—“From someone closely related to her.”—“We do not know of anyone closely related to her and privileged to send her secret messages. Perhaps you will explain yourself more clearly. It is impossible . . . I am sorry, but . . . tell me the name of the person.” A pause. Finally, in half-choked tones: “Maurizius.”—“May I know your address?”—“The Park Hotel.”—“You will receive a letter in an hour’s time.” He waited in the hall. Exactly an hour later a letter was handed to him; it ran: “Having expected what has now occurred, three days ago we sent Hildegard out of the country to visit some intimate friends. We could not have assumed the responsibility of subjecting her to a shock, and to continued anxieties, which would, in view of her delicate health and her very sensitive nature, have upset, if they did not destroy, her whole future. The man on whose behalf you are applying to us should understand this at once and should regulate his conduct accordingly. It has always been the chief solicitude of those in charge of the dear child’s education to avoid burdening her with a knowledge which would have darkened her life at the very outset. This was one of the duties which we assumed when we took charge of her, and it must be carried out to the end. It is, for everyone concerned, simply a matter of course.—HERR AND FRAU KRUSE.”

Maurizius scrambled to his feet as if emerging from a pit, crumpling the paper in his hand, and fell fainting to the floor.

Some of the hotel guests came to his assistance; as they were about to take him to his room he recovered consciousness. The fact that his consciousness was of no use to him, and gave him no pleasure, was another matter.

6

His determination to see Anna Jahn, now Mme. Duvernion, to secure an interview with her, could have arisen only in a mind which had been deprived of its relations to normal standards. It was a blind longing to cling to the past; a flickering hope that he would thus find a way to Hildegard; a consolation, a truce, instead of the gate slammed in his face, instead of the final refusal, instead of the "Be off with you, branded murderer!" It was the hope of hearing a few human words, of finding a heart which had recovered itself, which was responsive and receptive, and would show him the way to a brighter world. He was still wandering, this incurable romantic, in the enlightened spheres where such things exist as compensation and the brotherhood of souls. He was still capable of feeling: Things cannot and may not be as they are, and therefore they are not. He was still denying and refusing to see the existing facts; still trying to insist on and enforce the opposite, still running his head against a stone wall, contrary to all reason. He was a victim of that imperious sensuality which accepts no truth, recognizes no alteration, and fabricates possibilities which no longer exist. Such persons must learn, learn by grievous experience, and again and again experience breaks their heads. So, next day, he went by train to Echternach, near Trier, close to the border of Luxemburg, took rooms in a little inn, and wrote to Anna Duvernion, under the name of Markmann, but in such terms that she would realize who was writing to her, that he was there for a few hours, and must speak to her; she was to name the time and place. The Duvernion brick-works was about fifteen minutes' walk from the town, and the house, he was told, was not far distant. He sent the letter by a messenger, insisting that it was to be given to the lady herself. This was at three o'clock. At half-past four a small motor-

car drove up to the inn, and from the window he saw a woman leave it and hurry indoors. He remained at the window, as though paralysed, and when there was a knock at the door his lips were unable to frame the words: Come in. His visitor was already in the room; her face was pale, her breathing was distressed, and she stared restlessly about her with dark, apathetic eyes. She wore a blue dress, a yellow dust-coat, and a little yellow hat with a blue veil over it; all was utterly commonplace; no glamour, no charm survived; there was nothing of those rare, those unique qualities which excite and torment, preoccupy and gladden the beholder just because they are rare, just because they are unique. Her person was here a little full and flaccid, there a little withered; the contours had altered a little; only a very little, but that little meant destruction. Just as her skin was faded, so there was something faded in her bearing and in her glance; the incomparable delicacy which had been hers at nineteen had changed into a rather sickly fragility; spiritual suffering had given place to the prosperous querulousness so prevalent in bourgeois security. Her outward appearance told everything; it was enough to make one fear what was to follow, as it made all conversation superfluous; but Maurizius was unwilling to see what he nevertheless perceived with mysterious clairvoyance; he had turned slowly round, and was now standing unnerved, his arms hanging limply. If I could cry now, he thought; if I could kneel down and cry! If I could say all, ask all, forget all, and weep, and weep, and weep!

But Anna Duvernion was as far removed from any such impulse as she was from understanding it. Her voice was so low that it was scarcely more than a hissing as she said: "You can't stay here, of course; I have come because . . . because, it must somehow be prevented. . . . It's fortunate that you did not use your right name; even so it's risky enough. How could you . . .? I am not equal to such excitement. I read of your release in the papers. . . . I could not foresee that you would come here. Is it about anything in particular? Tell me quickly; I must go at once. I told them downstairs that you were a business friend of my husband's, with whom I have something to arrange."

Maurizius took off his glasses and looked silently at the woman. She dropped her eyes; her forehead fell into hard lines. "After all, there's no point in it," she murmured unwillingly, somewhat embarrassed.—"So it would appear," he said, without averting his stern gaze from her face. "Perhaps there is no point in it."—"I have broken with the past," she continued, in the same sibilant tones, looking anxiously toward the doors to the right and left of her. "You don't know. . . . Even a few years ago. . . . But why stir up such frightful recollections? Prayer has helped me. One must have the moral strength to free oneself from the past. And then I have children . . . life . . . duty . . . above all, duty, if one has once recognized that.—You understand?"—"Yes, certainly," said Maurizius. What is all this, he thought in amazement; is she really saying all this, or am I merely imagining it? What manner of person *is* this? "I suppose I may not ask you to sit down for a few minutes?" he inquired, hesitating; "there are several things . . ."—"Oh, God, no!" she replied in alarm, although she was visibly relieved, by his manner and tone, of the fear which had been weighing upon her and had been responsible for her hectic restlessness. Her manner became less convulsive, although it still tortured her to remain in Leonhart's presence. Apparently she had anticipated a stormy discussion, with appeals and importunities, demands and inquisitions, and a hostility which would imperil her security. She had been driven hither by fear; she had not intended or wished to come, but had rather obeyed a terrified impulse in the hope of preventing these horrors. Now, with feminine intuition, which was quicker to perceive and exploit an advantage than to defend a menaced position, she saw that she had nothing to fear from this man, and this at once made her vaguely confident. She no longer felt any qualms of conscience, any perturbing memories; at most there was an obscure stirring of melancholy images, of something that had been trampled underfoot, emptied of all intelligible substance, in whose veins the blood no longer flowed; something as void of meaning as though it had been experienced by another person; something preserved in the storehouse of bygone years, but no longer true,

no longer existing; it was something that had been calcined, congealed, coagulated.

"It is on account of Hildegard," began Maurizius. "I went to see those people in Kaiserswerth; I wanted to ask your help and advice. . . . They did not even let me in. . . . The child had been sent away."

Anna Duvernion shrugged her shoulders. "I have absolutely nothing to do with that," she interrupted him hastily.—"I could do without everything else; that one demand I still cling to," he said, sadly.—"You are addressing yourself to the wrong person. Her guardian must make the decision. I withdrew from the responsibility years ago. The responsibility was too great."

During his years of imprisonment Maurizius had formed the habit of carefully observing the person who was speaking to him, and when he had ceased, of continuing to look at him, silently, for several seconds before he began to speak in his turn, with a melancholy, wandering glance, and a certain effort, as though he had to make himself understood through some obstacle. "Responsibilities always become too heavy when one wishes to dispose of them," he replied. This aphorism was too much for Anna Duvernion's powers of comprehension. She did not hear the bitterness in it, but merely the resignation. Suddenly she began to interpret everything that he said pleasantly; that is, in her favour, perhaps because she had had things all her own way so far, and because the man seemed as remote to her as his cause. For it was no longer in any way *her* cause; it was no longer anything that connected her with him; she even marvelled that it ever had been her cause. He looked as though he understood her point of view, so that she no longer felt it necessary to remain, and tried to find a suitable pretext for leaving. There was no longer any risk involved. What had at first seemed a terrible blow, which had roused her from her thickly encrusted peace, was dwindling down, to her unspeakable relief, into a harmless incident, which filled her with a kind of thankfulness; a process as primitive as the greed of an old peasant-woman, or the calculations of a superstitious gambler. "One must take life as it is,"

she said, with an approach at warmth, which was, however, too slight to temper the hopeless platitude of the remark; "but one struggles, doesn't one? With self-confidence one can overcome the difficulties. Self-confidence, and confidence in God. Both are necessary. We too have hard times behind us. Anyone who has not experienced this war—but frightful as it was, it helped me. It strengthened me morally. Not only morally. It helped my nerves. A real cure. Formerly I was so subject to those seizures. A thoughtless word from anyone acted on me like poison. Now . . . for it is true that when a whole nation, when all humanity suffers, the individual forgets his egoistic interests; one becomes humbler, less self-important, don't you think so?"—"Of course. I understand that very well." What is all this, wondered Maurizius, in the greatest amazement; what is she talking about? What is happening? What does she want? What is she talking about? What's the point of it all?

"Now I must go. I have stayed too long as it is. We have guests. . . . Good-bye." She hesitatingly lifted her hand. Maurizius seemed not to see it. He bowed as stiffly as a Chinese god, whereupon Anna Duvernion felt that she ought to add something to what she had said. "I wish you everything fine and good for the future." This was like a stab in the neck. Everything fine and good; splendid, splendid; where have we got to, my bountiful patroness? His voice said, in toneless irony: "I thank you." She was gone.

Alone, Maurizius pressed his two hands, with his fingers interlaced, across his forehead. He stood thus rigidly for a while. Good heavens, how stupid she is! he thought; how stupid, how abysmally stupid! Beauty, soul (or what seemed to be soul), grace, charm, dæmonic ambiguity, passion, and capacity for suffering—a mere protective coloration, applied with a delicate brush; the years had washed them away, revealing the blank background; Nature had exposed her own lie. Here was no heart, no comprehension of fate, no gleam from a higher world; only camouflage, only a painted screen. She was simply stupid, stupid; like those who have stood still in life; like those living

corpses who do not realize that their hearts and minds are dead; as stupid as a spectre. And it was all for that, for that! Almighty God, for *that*—martyrdom and crucifixion, nineteen years in a grave, for *that*. . . . He lay flat on his stomach on the floor, pressing even his face against the boards. Above his left eyebrow he felt the cold head of a nail. It was a relief to feel the cold iron of the nail; he would have been glad if the nail had turned round in the wood and drilled its point into his brain.

Time, which may generously conceal, or cruelly expose, has a sovereign manner of elucidating what, from its lack of true measure and proportion, appears to the human eye a hopeless intricacy of mysterious profundities. The original simplicity of things, once the turbid clouds of the present have been dissipated, is surpassed only by the simplicity of fate. Even the verbal magic of a Waremmé cannot alter this. Those who dream that they can justify themselves before God, or explain the disorder of their ways by twisting the simplicity of the world into a pompous mystery, are the truly damned, for they cannot be saved from themselves. In the case of Anna Jahn-Duvernion there was, of course, one thing which must be taken into account. In her the miracle of youth flowered so gloriously that, like a great work of art, it admitted of many interpretations, and assumed many aspects, so that it seemed to everyone to be what he sought in it or read into it. Then the years did their work of destruction, and what was left was the mere absence of magic; was in a certain sense dust and ashes; but yet a woman, no worse than thousands of others, and probably not more stupid.

7

He left Echternach. At the booking-office he took a ticket for Mainz. He spent the night there, and the next day went on to Basle. There he obtained a room which had a view of the Rhine. The river seemed to him merely a witness of his misery, a witness that insistently pursued him; he packed his things quickly, and took the train to Zürich. He bought some books there, but was too restless to read them. He hired a motor-boat and voyaged

round the lake, but the lake was too small, too narrow, too confined. He talked with the hotel-porter, the chambermaid, the waiter, and this or that guest; that is, he wasted his breath. He was an interesting-looking man; he carried himself well and was well dressed; he was taken for a scholar, a writer; he was treated with respect; many sought to make his acquaintance; but the serious, almost sinister face with the dark spectacles presented an insuperable obstacle. He liked best to talk to children, in the public squares where the children played; sometimes he sat down on a bench and waited until one approached him; then he would speak to the child affectionately and quietly, ask it questions, and pass his hand tenderly over its hair; but as a rule he could see that the grown-ups were becoming distrustful, so he got up and went away.

Sometimes the noise of the city became a torment to him; sometimes, again, it soothed him to wander amidst crowds of people, half-driven by the throng. The grinding and pounding of machinery was easier to bear than the sound of bells, the roar of voices than the tones of a single voice. A single voice compelled his attention; attention strained his nerves, until gradually the breaking-point was reached. As a rule he spent sleepless nights; but it was not his dark thoughts that kept him awake; it was a condition of not being aware of himself, of not being in possession of himself, which left him in a state of lethargic amazement. He had the feeling that this was already sleep, and that he must not really sleep, for then he might slip even farther out of hand. Then he would feel parts of his body with his hand—his thighs, his arms, his hips; that helped him; he was sure of these parts at least. The beds were too soft for him; for a long time he could not get used to sinking into feathers; often he made up a bed on the sofa, wrapping himself in his travelling-rug, in order to feel something rough about him. Sometimes he thought of working; but why should he work; to what would it lead? Everything was so inconsequential. There was no continuity anywhere. He did not belong to the world. Not only did everything he undertook and performed lead to nothing, but it was at the same time

revocable in a distracting sort of way. Whether he took the turning to the right or to the left, whether he bought English or Egyptian cigarettes, whether he gave orders to be awakened at six or at eight, whether he wore black or brown shoes, whether he drew three hundred or a thousand francs at the bank, he could at any time, and in the most irritating way, change his mind. He could always do the other thing, the opposite thing, a different thing. Nothing was important. Anything could instantly be rescinded, without regret, without consequences. Now it is a fact that the grace of life, indeed the possibility of life, resides in its revocability. He, however, in the prime of his manhood, was robbed of the feeling of revocability, for he was irrevocably condemned; he had suffered an irrevocable punishment, and he had to live on irrevocably. This, however, was not possible; one cannot live under the burden of irrevocability; and therefore, in a vengeful reaction of nature, his will compelled him to the petty, commonplace, revocable actions that annulled the law of life. Thus he became a detached individual, free from any law, free as a bird before his own consciousness. He pondered continually as to how he might put an end to this; the discord within him bordered on madness; at times some saving thought flashed upon him, and he thought he perceived some situation in which he could not recall his acts, in which this fatal irrevocability would cease to be his destiny. This would be a way of winning back to the law, to the highest law, that repudiates no mortal being; but to tread this path he must indeed be an Ahasuerus.

He packed his things again and travelled to the mountains. He travelled over passes and through valleys; he spent the nights in remote hostelrys, far from the pleasure-seekers and tourists. No landscape smiled at him; no meadow smelled sweet; neither woods nor snowy peaks could compel him to raise his eyes. He felt neither awe nor pleasure, neither curiosity nor enticement. He sought the railway again. He went on and on and on. He spent the night at any chance hotel, unpacked his things, packed them again in the morning, and went on and on. A city. Again a city. Cathedrals, fountains, monuments, pillared cloisters. They

made no impression on him. It might all have been a moderately interesting picture-book. The halls of the Pitti Palace, Titian and Tintoretto in Venice, the Pinacoteca in München—they all meant nothing. Formerly, he would have been overwhelmed with delight. These things were the colour, the soul, the kernel of his being. Dürer's apostles were so many tiresome old men. The little statuette in Cassel for which he had longed was just a bit of verdigrised old bronze. Nothing stirred in him. Things, achievement, the world itself: all murdered. Everything was constantly drawing farther away from him. He began to perceive the grouping of human beings, their stratifications, and the way in which they were massed together. Organization. His mysterious remoteness enabled him to detect transformations which escaped the notice of those who were really a part of these things. Not only had the language changed, in respect of its modulations and the meanings of words, but men's faces no longer had the same expression as twenty years earlier; their dissatisfaction was a different dissatisfaction; their astonishment a different astonishment; and anger had assumed a different form. People's eyes were more widely opened, their gaze was more immovable, more unveiled; their gait showed a greater eagerness to reach their goal; the bearing of the average man reminded one of a hunter with a cocked rifle; laughter sounded more convulsive. It was not so in the old days. Everything was turning in a new direction, obeying new laws of combination and movement. People had a different skin, a different stature, a different tempo, and a means of communication which he did not yet understand; they knew a kind of love and a kind of hate from which he felt excluded as a foreign body; their dances and forms of entertainment made him feel like Gulliver in Brobdingnag. He felt sorry for the old people, and the young ones intimidated him curiously; as a little boy he had a similar feeling when, for the first time, he had to strip naked in a public bath. Gulliver in Brobdingnag; or, better still, a miner who has been forgotten in a mine-shaft and has spent five hundred years imprisoned in the dark. When he reaches the upper world again he is unspeakably lonely in the

midst of millions; he does not even know the names for the sky and air and earth.

One day he went by train from Hanover to Berlin. Facing him in his compartment was an attractive-looking woman of perhaps thirty. She was dressed in good taste; her bearing was reserved, her features were curiously delicate, her glance was curiously veiled; and a curiously ironical but kindly smile played about the delicate lips. Most attractive of all were her hands, which she was constantly moving, very slowly, now clasping them, now rubbing them together, now lighting a cigarette, now folding her arms and resting on her elbows. They seemed to speak of the desire and the burden of life. They were soft white hands, with straight tapering fingers. He could not cease from studying and observing them; and the young woman smiled her ironical, kindly smile. They got into conversation. Although neither said anything of importance to the other, each sensed from the other's words the loneliness which surrounded each. The woman, however, seemed more deeply touched; she had some inkling of a prodigious wrong; she was undoubtedly a woman of profound instincts. She became less talkative as they approached their destination; her manner indicated a melancholy indifference, as though her body, drugged with sleep, were hanging half over an abyss, and she were indifferent, or even desirous of plunging into it. Maurizius understood, more with his senses than with his brain; his heart swelled, and he too became taciturn; they gazed at one another, silently and shyly, for long, long minutes. His face was deathly pale; hers had the painful tenseness of one who cannot yet guess, and does not care to know, whether she will be chastised or caressed. They left the train together; they walked side by side to a taxi-stand; the woman gave an address in Halensee, and they drove the long distance in silence. The woman noticed that Maurizius trembled from time to time; then she gazed silently straight ahead and smiled. She had a little flat in Halensee; two rooms on the fourth floor, neat and comfortable; there was even a suggestion of luxury; books and flowers were scattered about. What sort of a woman was she? Divorced?

Childless? Strangled by fate, driven to a last refuge? He did not learn; he was not curious; just as she had no desire to learn what would happen to her during the next few hours. At all events, she was not among "the dead"; that was quite certain; she stood before him a living woman, with a sort of high-heartedness, soft, ironical and heedless, such as many women have when their hopes are at an end (when they are hanging half over an abyss); a certain sweet phlegm as of a soul redeemed. She prepared tea, set the table, and urged her guest to help himself; and then, as she suddenly hesitated in addressing him, he gave her his name, his real name. She reflected, looked at him, and thought again. He told her: I am such and such a person. Ten words, and the meaning was—twenty years. She looked at him. The soft mouth began to quiver; she was obviously struggling with the fear that he would misinterpret any feeling which she might show, any random feeling whatsoever—a wonderful and exquisite delicacy; she fell on her knees before him, and taking his hand, pressed her lips to it almost reverently. Dear God in heaven, he thought; and there he sat without a breath, or word, or glance. The woman was nameless for him; how beautiful that she had no name; it raised her above all other women. Lord, release me from my name, he prayed, passionately. Arms embraced him. A body crept up to him. To him, actually—to him. If he could only do something to thank her! He had no thanks; he had no gift. Suddenly he was alone. Where was she? Obviously she had left him. Everything was over; she would never come back. Hopeless, he rose, looked about him, listened, and went into the other room; there she lay in bed, waiting for him, her eyes shining with an overwhelming ardour. This could not really be; it was all a dream! The light in the room went out. They lay beside one another. Whispers and silence. Motionless. Whispers and silence. Hours passed. A hoarse, hard, desperate sobbing. It was he. The nameless woman sought to console him. No; no consolation; no consolation. Sex had been murdered. One had therefore—here was the proof—no further share in the world. Sex too had been murdered. When day dawned at the window, Maurizius got up and dressed

quickly; the woman had fallen asleep and did not hear him go. With his suitcase in his hand—his trunk was still at the station—he walked through the streets; the morning air refreshed him. He found a hotel and slept until evening. When he woke up he felt extraordinarily well; he took a bath, and ordered a plentiful meal. Towards nine o'clock he went to the station and took a first-class ticket for Leipzig; in Leipzig he decided to take the night train south. He had no particular destination; he mentioned some city because he was obliged to do so. He was alone in the compartment. He read the papers, opened a book, and laid it down again. He closed his eyes, and heard his blood flowing in his veins. After a long while he opened his eyes again, took an apple from his suitcase, peeled it carefully, quartered it, and ate the cool juicy fruit with great enjoyment. He felt in high spirits; he was conscious of a sort of longing for action. He leaned his head against the window-pane; from the thick darkness outside lights blazed forth from time to time like rockets. He pulled down the window. A black landscape, a faintly illuminated sky; behind the clouds a few insanely remote stars. The contours of the hills stood out clearly. The train, with its panting asthmatic engine, struggled up an incline; in the depths below water was roaring. He threw away his cigarette; it fell obliquely into the abyss; he could follow the glowing speck for quite a distance. Whistling softly, he moved to the carriage door, pressed down the handle, and opened it; the cold night air rushed in. The train was rattling over a high, unfenced viaduct, close to the edge. There was a ravine directly beneath his feet. Holding on to the rusty iron hand-rail, he clambered down the steps of the carriage and looked searchingly, with a gentle curiosity, into the unknown depths. He felt as though the world had suddenly turned upside down and the starry sky were beneath him. That he was soiling his hands on the rusty iron bar was an unpleasant thought. Ridiculously enough, he even thought of going back to wash them. From the window of the following carriage the conductor saw him; the man was beside himself with horror and rage; he clutched at the ledge of the window, shook his fists, screamed

with all his might; Maurizius did not hear him; he merely saw the wide-open mouth with its two rows of teeth, like those of some beast of prey. He nodded indifferently. He took the step into empty space. It was high time; a few yards farther, and the train would have crossed the viaduct. He took the step as one walks from one room into another. It was the step into the great, the truly irrevocable.

THE LAST CHAPTER

I

ETZEL's return to his father's house caused a considerable sensation among the servants and other occupants of the block of flats. Above all, of course, the worthy Rie was unable to repress her exuberance, and between laughing and crying she scarcely knew what she was about. He arrived at ten o'clock in the morning; as he was extremely short of funds, he had travelled fourth class, and the journey had taken almost twenty-four hours. After the first torrent of questions and interjections, an endless wringing of hands, and many sighs of thankfulness, Rie expressed her horror at his appearance; as a matter of fact he looked more like an itinerant tinker than a member of respectable society. His jacket was torn; his shirt was greasy; his knee-breeches looked like two potato-bags sewn together; his shoes were worn and full of holes; his hair had grown down upon his neck; his face was long and thin; and his eyes glowed unnaturally large in the pale oval. When he had got rid of his rucksack, which looked just as bulky as when he had left, he asked for a bath, clean clothes and food, and went to his room. Rie could not make up her mind to leave him to himself; she simply gave careful instructions in the kitchen regarding his breakfast; then she followed him at once. She opened drawers and wardrobes, rushed into the bathroom to turn on the taps, and emerged again, and while with trembling hands she fished out all the things he needed, she began a nervous, gossiping account of events. Unimportant things at first; incidents of the neighbourhood; the birth of a child, a burglary at the jeweller's, a fire in one of the rooms at the Malapert's on the floor below. Then, incidentally, "Holy Saints, Emma, the tap! The bath will overflow!" The more important household affairs came next. Herr von Andergast was not at home. This, of course, was not unusual, since he always went to the office at nine-thirty. It was, however, worthy of remark that for some time he had been coming home at unusual hours, as early as eleven or half-past; then he went to his study,

remaining there the rest of the day, even having his meals served there. And he had changed in every possible respect. For example, he no longer put his clothes out to be brushed. And once he did not shave for three days. And, most remarkable of all, he did not seem to work when he sat at his desk from noon till night. Rie had surprised him the day before yesterday—when she had to take him a telegram—sitting with his elbows on the window-sill, thoughtfully occupied in snapping his silver cigarette-lighter on and off. Perhaps it was all connected with the incredible rumour, which none the less persisted, that he had applied for his pension.

Etzel listened attentively, but did not say a word. He saw that Rie had something more on her heart; but first she drove him into his bath; and while he was dressing she took care to provide a substantial breakfast. She laid the table herself, looked on for a time in silent delight while he devoured everything that was served, and then ventured to remark: "You've grown, Etzel; you look so manly. What has actually been happening to you? When I stop to consider, my brain stands still!"—"Just let it stand, and don't consider anything," he replied drily. "You'd better go on telling me things. You're bursting with news; come, out with it." Rie leaned over towards him and told him that his mother was in town, and was living with the *Generalin*.

Etzel jumped up. "Is that true, Rie? Your word of honour?" She nodded, and added that Frau von Andergast had called at the flat ten days ago, and had had a long conversation with his father; she had spoken to her too; not much, of course; she had only expressed her thanks and said how do you do, but one could judge from that that she was a true lady. "And what does she look like, Rie? Nice? Young? Did you get a good look at her? Tell me carefully." He put his left arm round her shoulder and stroked her cheek with his right hand. Rie, who had long been unaccustomed to such demonstrations from her Etzel, became quite weak with delight, and shed tears of happiness. "So she's really living with grandmother, Rie?"—"Yes, little Etzel, and we must telephone at once; it's unpardonable of me not to have done it before." Etzel held her tightly by the arm. "No, just

wait, Rie; I don't like telephoning. That won't do. I'll go there myself. But there must be something else before that. . . ." At that moment the door was opened wide, and Herr von Andergast stood on the threshold.

2

The alteration at which Rie had hinted was unmistakable. It was visible even in the carriage of the head, which seemed to rest more heavily on the shoulders, and to thicken the neck with its weight. There were many white hairs in the beard, and the fringe of hair round the bald skull was now more white than grey. The eyelids rose and fell more slowly; the violet-blue glance was in some way more relaxed and less alert. Disorganization. The world of thought was out of joint. Only a man could look thus who had had a more intimate experience of certain realities than he had ever assumed or feared was possible. His inviolability was gone. Immovability was beset by doubts. There was a retrograde process at work here; the man's whole world had been shattered as by repeated explosions, and resolved into its crude and elementary form. One thought of a palace reduced to the heap of stones from which it had risen, with the architect standing before it, deserted by all his workmen, himself no longer aware of the dimensions. It was not astonishing that this man should look like a man who was distractedly seeking for something. The strained expression of his face betrayed his preoccupation with irrevocable things. Examination, criticism, judgment and annulment; and the final court of appeal was within the man himself. It may be objected that this is a comfortable way of stating that it was necessary for the man to retire. But this hardly affects the decisions of the conscience, which are all that matter for the moment. This is what I call looking closely at things: turning back to them. The man who goes forward can keep anything that reminds him of failure and decay from touching him. But let him only turn back and the abhorrent brood is about his ears, like the bats that nest in a deserted barracks, and he ceases to be what he is: a civil servant, for example, whose

objectivity must not be disturbed by any glance behind the scenes. There were evenings and nights when Herr von Andergast seemed to himself the *alter ego* of the convict Maurizius. Incarcerated in a house of memories, he was condemned to bear the presence and proximity of noxious individuals. They crowded about him: thieves, receivers, burglars, pimps, murderers, drunken prostitutes, mothers who maltreat their children, fraudulent bankrupts, coiners, swindlers, forgers, counterfeiters, smugglers, poisoners, child-murderers, incendiaries; an army without age limit; characters enough for ten thousand novelists; and there was he, the accuser, denouncing each one as guilty. In the end it becomes a matter of habit, like everything else; a habit invested with dignity and supported by the credit of the nation. One becomes hardened. The lawyer's robe isolates. One sits on the curule chair and hands over the evil-doer to the judge, who, with the help of the statutes, renders him harmless. That one should handle this scum of human society with velvet gloves is inconceivable; even the convict Maurizius and his morbid, romantic bosom friend Klakusch would not ask so much. One cannot permit the stern world of events to degenerate into a mush of irresponsibility, or reorganize the social order every Monday morning only to admit one's despairing impotence and incompetence every Saturday afternoon. But when the thousands and thousands of faces pass in review, one or the other emerges; a sudden flash of light falls dreadfully upon it, and in the eyes, and on those bitterly compressed lips, there lies a question. Nothing more than that: a question; a wordless question. And that is enough. One face or another out of all that army; it is enough. The curious thing is this: that one person always bears witness for a whole army. Just as the convict Maurizius had testified for all, for a whole world. Then, automatically, it comes to pass that the criminal who was condemned perhaps sixteen years ago, and whose name has already been forgotten, suddenly becomes the prosecutor, because suddenly, from some disregarded hiding-place, circumstances come to light, or appear worthy of consideration, which, if one had regarded them

formerly, would have made a human case out of a legal one; and what is one to do with a human case? The State and the law afford one no means of dealing with it. But this morbid compulsion to turn round, to look back, was forcing Herr von Andergast, with his incomparable memory for facts, to visualize the whole structure and progress of the trial, just as he had done in the Maurizius case, even from time to time consulting the documents, and delving and delving and delving into the past. But since he was no longer applying himself to one case only—since his mind was busy with half a dozen or more cases simultaneously—there were times when everything grew confused, and he felt himself beset by a very witches' sabbath, so that not infrequently (unknown to Rie) he left the house late at night, and wandered through the deserted streets until the day began to break. And echoes of legal altercations broke through the silence: "The accused states that on the day in question he had lunched at his aunt's between twelve and half-past one . . . but it is proved . . . I propose once more to call this witness, on whose evidence the defence has cast unfounded aspersions. . . . Madam, your testimony gives rise to the gravest doubts. I remind you of your oath. . . ." Timid glances, passionate protestations, faces full of fear and hatred, the verification of times and routes. Chance the betrayer, inanimate objects as betrayers; personal inspections of premises: gardens, and courtyards, river-banks, thieves' kitchens; false accusations; desperate struggles for acquittal; unconvinced juries, arrogant counsel, indolent judges, prejudiced judges, the obscurity of the law, public opinion misled; and now, in retrospect, the whole established fabric of the law is infected by a grisly doubt, like grain rotting in a granary. . . . A mile of punishment for an inch of guilt. . . . No consideration of the inner personality, and always someone—there, and there, and there—with that silent question upon his lips, repudiating the right to judge, and accusing the accuser. Often, when people passed him in silence, Herr von Andergast felt a sudden dread, as though he was about to be called upon to give an account of himself, and could not remember why, and in what connection; then, when

the encounter had passed off uneventfully, he felt a temptation to hurry after the person in question and ask him to walk a little way with him. He did not like to be so alone. He thought it not impossible that he might meet the released convict Maurizius unexpectedly at some street-corner. The thought grew into a wish, the wish into a vehement longing. He stood before the doors of hotels to watch the people coming in and out; he peeped through the chinks of the curtains of taverns and coffee-houses; it was not impossible that Maurizius might be inside; he too alone, assuredly not less alone than Herr von Andergast. One evening he went to the house where Violet Winston had lived. He rang the door-bell. A girl who opened the door of the opposite flat said that the young lady had left the week before. In spite of this information he came again the next night, as though he had quite forgotten what he had been told, or as though he thought that Violet might have returned in the meanwhile. At the same time he had retained no definite image of her, and if she had really opened the door it would have meant nothing to him. That same night, at home, he looked among his old letters for those which he had received from Etzel. (There were only a few; the boy had written them on his holidays, from the camp in the Odenwald.) These he read carefully through, again and again, as though the simple words had a double meaning which it was of urgent and instant importance to decipher.

3

Etzel went up to him and held out his hand, saying: "Good morning, father"; just as though he had seen him the day before. Herr von Andergast looked over his son's head, past him, at Rie's apron: "So you've returned," he said, and the opening and closing of his mouth had something fish-like about it. There was a pause. "May I ask you to come to my room?"—"Certainly, father." They went into the study. Rie looked after them as though she were thinking: if I see that boy safe and sound again, I'll thank God in my prayers. Herr von Andergast preceded Etzel, waited for him to enter the room, closed the door, and pointed to

a chair: "Please be seated." Etzel stared at the brown, hairy hand as it pointed to the chair, and sat down obediently. Herr von Andergast strode up and down the length of the room, with unusual haste. Etzel had never seen his father walk so quickly before. The internal emotion thus expressed evoked a sense of satisfaction in him.

"I thought I could get over it," Herr von Andergast began, walking more rapidly, "but I have not got over it. There is a sort of betrayal which one does not get over at my years. Details are of no importance. You will spare me those. The immediate question is not: what has happened, but: what is to happen now?"—"Quite right, father; I feel that myself," replied Etzel, modestly. Herr von Andergast stopped with a jerk and gazed at him: "Such insight does you honour," he remarked, sarcastically. He came a step nearer, laid his hand on the boy's forehead and pushed his head backwards. "You look astonishingly done up," he remarked gloomily, and he withdrew his hand as though he had burned it.—"I have been ill, father."—"Ah, ill. No wonder. Where have you been gadding about?" Suddenly he shouted, with his face convulsed, losing all self-control; he shouted wildly: "Boy, where have you been gadding about?" and clapping his hands over his eyes, he groaned.

Etzel had not expected this. It was the first time in his life that he had seen his father beside himself. And his touch, before that: it had seemed to him that his father's hand had trembled; and the lines about his mouth, the look of torment on his face—all this impressed him. He must think about it. And it appeased him. While he was collecting himself and preparing to reply, Herr von Andergast had regained control of himself.

"When I went away, I wrote to you why I had to go," said Etzel. "There was no question of gadding about." Herr von Andergast threw himself into the desk-chair and crossed his legs; his fingers played nervously with his beard. "You certainly evaded the inquiries that were made with praiseworthy skill," he remarked into the air.—"Well, if I could not even do that——" said Etzel, lifting his eyebrows. Herr von Andergast thought the

tone impertinent, and cleared his throat in warning. "Well, and now?" he asked, with a touch of sarcasm intended to cloak his fear. "And now? 'Nothing succeeds like success', the Americans say." He spoke in English.—"I know. I have been learning a little English." Etzel interjected, with a caustic smile which increased his father's displeasure. "Well then!"—he collected himself and lifted his head energetically: "Maurizius is innocent. Absolutely. Innocent and condemned. A gross miscarriage of justice." Herr von Andergast gave a scarcely perceptible start. He looked at his finger-nails. Now the cards were on the table. He replied, with the frostiness which Etzel always designated as 'the lunch-time chill': "That is easy to state; it might be harder to prove it."—"If I could not prove it, I should not be here." A surprised glance from the desk-chair; the glance glided to the floor, as though put to flight by an unexpectedly powerful adversary. There was something in the boy's expression which was difficult to face: the blaze of certainty. "A large assertion," Herr von Andergast sneered stiffly.

"Waremmé committed perjury," Etzel continued, with decision: "I got it out of him. I found him. His name is no longer Gregor Waremmé. It is Georg Warschauer. That was his original name. He lives in Berlin. I was with him almost daily for seven weeks. I shall not say that we became friends. I can't talk about that. It was . . . but that's of no consequence. The important thing is that he admitted his perjury to me. If you want to hear how I managed it I will tell you some time. It was not easy. You may take my word for that. It was like tearing the heart out of him. And I have a witness too, a woman. He does not know about her; but I am sure of her. Thank God!" There was eager expectation in this brief report; Etzel looked at his father steadily; his expression was one of tense anticipation. Herr von Andergast gently moved his right crossed leg and stared at the point of his shoe. He found himself in Violet Winston's bedroom, looking into the mirror. The mirror showed him a figure of David standing on the hand of Goliath, with a dark-lantern in his own hand, casting a beam of light on the horrible snail-like brain. The

vague amazement of that moment overflowed into the present. He looked up again: there was the boy with his blaze of certainty. He heard the peremptory question (it hissed through the air like a steel blade): "What must one do in such a case?" And he replied with icy coldness: "Nothing." Etzel leapt to his feet: "What . . . nothing?"—"There is nothing that must be done. There is nothing to do." Etzel could not help it; he gaped like an idiot. He stammered something. Had his father gone out of his mind?

"Any action is superfluous. The convict Maurizius has been pardoned." Etzel's eyes were like mill-wheels. "Pardoned? Par-doned?" A negligent nod from across the room. "Dispensed from the completion of his term of imprisonment under pardon." Etzel had to laugh. He knew that he was lacking in respect, but he could not help it; he had to laugh. "Pardoned . . . but I have just told you that he is innocent!"

A weary sigh from the victim of this importunity. "The remission of sentence by pardon takes this possibility, or probability into account." Resounding phrases. Etzel forgot himself, forgot the respect which he had been trained to show, and shouted: "But if he is innocent he does not need a pardon!"—"His innocence is no longer a subject of discussion. In any case, behave yourself!" Etzel recollected his breeding, which he had culpably neglected during his association with Waremmé; for a moment at all events discipline was stronger than indignation. "Yes . . . excuse me," he stammered, "but why is his innocence no longer open to debate; why, if you please?" And he made desperate little movements with his shoulders, as though to snap an invisible chain. Herr von Andergast condescended to discuss the matter. "I will assume that he is really guiltless. I will regard it as proved. I will assume that we have incontestable proof in our hands——"—"You can safely assume this."—"Your subjective conviction. With which, after all, you leave the basis of actuality. Let me finish. You interrupt me constantly. Your manners are quite extraordinary. I say that you are making a fatal mistake. It is a far cry to a juridical invulnerability. Have

you the confession in writing? Attested before a notary? Well then! Confessions may be retracted. It is even the rule. There are a hundred ways of evading the consequences of a confession. The time which has elapsed since the crime makes reliable investigations and the establishment of the facts absolutely impossible. A first hearing would show them to be uncertain; the second would show them to be untenable. Ask yourself whether, in view of the uncertain factors which you may be able to adduce, the result is worth the expenditure. You do not have to consider this. I *do* have to consider it." Etzel held out a hand.—"You began another sentence; you assumed him to be innocent; you would regard it as proven, you said—well, what then?"—"It would not alter anything."—"Not alter anything? Are you serious? Not alter anything—if you yourself were convinced of his innocence?"—"No, nothing. There is a barrier before which even our conviction must halt."—"But something tremendous is at stake! The most important thing in the world! It is justice that is at stake!" exclaimed Etzel, who had lost all control of himself. "A judgment can be declared invalid. Even though the punishment cannot be undone; the judgment can be reversed; one can and must restore the man's honour. And not only honour . . . for what is honour . . . what would he, what would we get out of that? Justice is like birth. Injustice is death. One must do something. You cannot look on at such things. . . . That would be. . . . To the best of my belief, there is a procedure for reopening cases. . . .!"

Herr von Andergast shook his head like a wooden puppet. "The talk of a layman," he replied, dully and reluctantly. "We must be careful. We who bear the responsibility cannot lightly attack the law and the administration of the law. A procedure for reopening a case! Stupid boy, you have no idea what that means. One does not mobilize an army in order to raise a fallen tree; particularly, moreover, if it is no longer capable of life and growth. To set a stupendous apparatus in motion, to startle the world, to reopen that old conflict which has been hunted to death; what are you thinking of? Amongst other things, even if

this perjury were not superannuated, yet, according to the provisions of the statute, the proceedings against this Waremmé would have to be dragged through all the courts in order to prove that he is guilty. That would take years. I am only telling you this in order that you may see how complicated these things are. The superannuation need not, of course, be regarded as an obstacle. There are, moreover . . . things to be considered, which are deserving of serious consideration; men's livelihoods are at stake; the treasury would be put to enormous expense; the reputation of the court affected would be damaged; the institution as such would be subjected to that destructive criticism which is sufficiently undermining the structure of society as things are. . . . Drop the idea that justice and the law are one and the same, or should be so. They cannot be. That is beyond human and earthly possibility. Their relation to one another is like that between the symbol of faith and the actual religious practice. You cannot live with the symbol. But if one's practice is strict and conscientious, to know that the eternal symbol is over one . . . that, how shall I put it, that absolves one. Such absolution is, of course, necessary. That one should content oneself with it . . . that is also necessary."

A lecture. A didactic lecture. When the voice ceased it was terribly silent in the room. Etzel stared into nothingness for awhile, with compressed lips; suddenly he cried shrilly: "No!" His eyes gleamed angrily. "No!" he shouted again. "I cannot and I won't live with that!" His whole intellect was ablaze. The barrier of respect had broken down. "I don't admit it," he stammered in an outburst of bitterness that expressed itself like intoxication. "Symbol . . . practice . . . what not . . . rotten phrases. . . ." He was deaf to a second thundering: "Behave yourself!" No, he didn't admit it. The human being possessed one primary right, one which is born in his breast with him. Every single individual has a right to his share of justice, just as he has a right to his share of the air which he breathes. If he is robbed of this, his very soul must stifle. "I don't recognize it, that other justice; I don't want it; I don't believe it. It's the cunning of

caste. A conspiracy. Priests fearing for their tribute-money. Religious practice? How so? What has it to do with religion, that one should leave an innocent person to perish because it is the practice, because the symbol is just hung over it like a helmet over a grinning policeman's face . . .?" He would not accept it. He repudiated it. He would rather not live. Better that the world should be shattered to bits than live in such vileness. "No . . . no . . . no . . ."

Outrageous, thought Herr von Andergast. He felt as though he were paralysed. He felt as though someone were holding his head over a kettle of boiling water. He rose to his feet with difficulty. Clutching at his throat, he said with a laborious dryness: "The conversation, for the rest, is pointless, for Maurizius has accepted his pardon. And accepted it without reservation." Etzel leapt forward a couple of paces. He folded his hands at the level of his eyes and pressed them flat against his mouth. "Accepted, accepted his pardon?" he whispered faintly.—"Without reservation. As I have said."—"And goes on living? He shoulders that injustice? And goes on living?" Herr von Andergast shrugged his shoulders. "A human being, as you see, can do anything." A wild laugh twisted Etzel's lips. "Yes, I see that a person can do anything," he replied, with an impertinent double meaning; "one person can do away with the truth and another can go and rot."—"Boy!" shouted Herr von Andergast.—"You've brought him to such a pass," continued Etzel, in absolute desperation (all that he had done had been undertaken in vain; all that he had built upon, as one builds on a rock, had crashed into nothingness). "That's where you've got to with your statutes and clauses, with your caution and consideration. . . . And then one is to hold one's tongue. . . . If he goes on living he does not deserve anything better . . . perhaps he has already thanked you, this Maurizius, for the kick with which you turned him out of prison. He thanks God for his nineteen years of imprisonment? Don't you know who fired that shot? Of course you know! That's probably the reason for the pardon. I don't believe that I can look on at this any longer. . . . Everything. . . .

Pardon! . . . where is the judge, that one can spit his pardon in his face . . . how shall I ever show myself among people again? . . . That's Andergast's boy, they'll say; the old man helped Maurizius to get a pardon, and the boy knuckles under to it; they are both in the same bag. . . . Splendid . . . splendid. A beautiful world. A wonderful world. If one could only croak on the spot!"

He groaned as though the earth were slipping from under him, as though his soul were leaving his body, full of regret that it had been obliged to spend sixteen years and some odd months in such a feeble, incompetent, boastfully presumptuous, polluted dwelling. He talked on with gasping breath, but his words were losing coherence. He could not overcome his deeply-rooted awe of his father; it restrained him even now, in his utter misery; he would have liked to say something far more decisive, far more fateful; but he could do nothing against the futility, the emptiness, the platitudinousness, the feebleness of words; he felt as though his mouth were full of dry sand. He ran like a madman round the arm-chair, his eyes bloodshot and glittering with rage; his hands snatched at it convulsively; he seized the tassels of the chair and tore them off; he stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth, bit his teeth into it and tore at it until it was a handful of tatters. His forehead was painfully convulsed; curious blue patches were forming there; he emitted sounds which might equally well have been laughter or a howl of rage, jumping from one foot to the other as though convulsed by an attack of St. Vitus's dance. This was no longer the charming, self-controlled, sensible, thoughtful little Etzel; this was a devil. "Just you wait!" he raged; "you won't get away with this; you'll pay for it; your turn will come all right!" Herr von Andergast stood petrified; a pillar of stone. Suddenly he made as though to seize the boy. He grasped Etzel's shoulder. The boy evaded him, his face distorted with fear, rage and repulsion. "I don't want to be your son!" he shouted in an utter frenzy—"Infamous boy!" The words rattled from Herr von Andergast's throat; but he had the look of a suppliant. Etzel ran to the dining-room door; Herr von

Andergast after him. Etzel tore breathlessly through the dining-room into the living-room; Herr von Andergast after him. Etzel dashed into the hall; Herr von Andergast after him. The doors behind them remained open. Etzel overturned the chairs which were in his way. Rie was standing in the hall; he pushed her aside and rushed into his room; Herr von Andergast after him. His powerful figure, dashing forward with hands outstretched, had something decidedly gruesome about it. The whole scene had the character of a savage hunt, senseless and ghastly. Rie, silent with horror, opened her mouth, but speech refused to come. Etzel, on reaching his room, banged the door and turned the key; Herr von Andergast pounded at the locked door. The cook and the maids rushed out of the kitchen. From the locked room they could hear the continuous jingle of breaking glass. Rie uttered a piercing scream, so that everyone in the building, upstairs and down, rushed on to the landings. Herr von Andergast hurled himself with his giant strength against the door; he succeeded in breaking it down. One leap, and he was in the room. Rie followed, wringing her hands. The Andergast and Malapert servants, the caretaker and his wife, and the postman who had just brought the mail, crowded together on the threshold. Etzel was standing by the table, covered with blood. Herr von Andergast staggered towards him and took the boy's head in both his hands. "Water, water," he muttered. Someone ran for water. Rie clasped her hands in prayer.

What had actually happened? Etzel had shattered the panes of both the windows, and not only these, but the mirror on the wardrobe door, the glasses on the washstand, the porcelain vases on the chest of drawers. A mad lust of destruction. A spiritual fury. Blood was dripping from his temples, cheeks and nose. He had simply dashed his head through the panes; then he had belaboured the mirror with his fists, so that his hands were lacerated up to his wrists, and his clothes were soaked through and through with blood. After that he suddenly calmed down; he was now standing quietly at the table, looking at his wounds with a smile of savage satisfaction, and blinking his eyelids

because the blood was running over his eyes. Even in his mind there was a strange quietness, almost as though some part of the disappointment that had poisoned his heart were flowing from his veins with his blood. He looked like one who has had a fall, who slowly picks himself up, and, gazing helplessly about him, asks the way which he has lost or forgotten. He can do nothing where he is; he looks about him as though to inquire what he shall do next.

Then Etzel's glance fell on his father; something like a hesitating amazement spread over his features, as though the familiar figure, which had once towered over him, had been transformed into another, which seemed, as it were, to be standing a few steps beneath him, and towards which one must even bend over a little in order to recognize it. No longer enigmatic, no longer the master and warder of mysteries, no longer the arbiter of obscure destinies, no longer Trismegistos, but a broken, guilty man. Herr von Andergast's mouth was half open; one could see his big teeth; and so, with his half-open mouth, he dropped on to a chair, with his violet-blue eyes protruding like buttons from their orbits, absolutely devoid of expression. (When, in the afternoon, accompanied by the doctor, he was taken to the sanatorium, he still looked precisely thus, his mouth half open, his eyes protruding and empty of all expression.) Thoughtfully Etzel considered the face which was literally disintegrating before his eyes, and while Rie began washing the blood from his cheeks, forehead and hands, he said, in his dry, clear, boyish voice: "Someone had better fetch my mother."

This was done.

4

And with this ends the Maurizius case, but not the story of Etzel Andergast.

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